

# Riding at the Margins

International Media and the Construction of a  
Generic Outlaw Biker Identity in the South Island of  
New Zealand, circa 1950 – 1975.

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Master of Arts in Cultural Anthropology

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## Abstract

New Zealand has had a visible recreational motorcycle culture since the 1920s, although the forerunners of the later 'outlaw' motorcycle clubs really only started to emerge as loose-knit biker cliques in the 1950s. The first recognised New Zealand 'outlaw club', the Auckland chapter of the Californian *Hell's Angels M.C.*, was established on July 1961 (Veno 2003: 31). This was the Angels' first international chapter, and only their fifth chapter overall at that time. Further outlaw clubs emerged throughout both the North and the South Island of New Zealand from the early 1960s, and were firmly established in both islands by the end of 1975. Outlaw clubs continue to flourish to this day.

The basic question that motivated this thesis was how (the extent to which) international film, literature, media reports and photographic images (circa 1950 – 1975) have influenced the generic identity adopted by 'outlaw' motorcycle clubs in New Zealand, with particular reference to the South Island clubs. The focus of the research was on how a number of South Island New Zealand outlaw bikers interpreted international mass media representations of 'outlaw' biker culture between 1950 – 1975. This time span was carefully chosen after considerable research, consultation and reflection. It encompasses a period when New Zealand experienced rapid development of a global mass media, where cultural images were routinely communicated internationally in (relatively) real time.

Drawing on the work of Okely and Cohen, I argue that 'outlaw' motorcycle clubs, like many other subcultures, construct their communities symbolically, and that some of the rituals and symbolism seen in New Zealand outlaw biker clubs today are substantially similar to those observed in 'outlaw' clubs in other parts of the world (Thompson 1966, Okely 1983, Cohen 1985, Veno 2003). My fieldwork clearly established that representations of outlaw motorcycle clubs were being actively consumed by South Island bikers via the international mass media from the early – mid 1960s. However, my research also revealed that, whilst the globalisation of the mass media was integral to the evolution of the generic New Zealand 'outlaw' biker social identity, it was not their only influence. South Island outlaw bikers, like any other consumer of mass media, accepted and at times appropriated some of the international and regional representations of their subculture, whilst clearly rejecting others. I also established that like any other international subculture, there were regional differences that were often determined by factors contingent to the locality, and that the South Island outlaw clubs from that period that still exist today were also influenced by conflict with significant others, including the police, during their formative stages. This supports Lavigne's and Veno's contention that warfare is good for clubs during their formative stage, as violent conflict weeds out the weak, whilst bonding surviving members to their clubs and their club brothers (Lavigne 1987: 301, Veno 2003: 263).

Key words: community; sub-cultures; media; identity; gangs; outlaw motorcycle clubs

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# Contents

## Acknowledgement

## List of Plates

<b><u>Chapter One:</u></b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
	Aim of thesis	1
	The Generic OMC image	4
	Methods	12
	Thesis Chapter Outline	18
<b><u>Chapter Two:</u></b>	<b>Anthropology, the Media and Groups at the Margins</b>	<b>21</b>
	Media and the Construction of Meaning – an introduction	21
	Anthropology, the Media and Globalisation	
23		
	The Anthropology of Marginalised and ‘Outsider’ Groups	27
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	<b>Post-War Culture, the Visual and Print Media, and 36</b>	
	<b>the Evolution of an International ‘Outlaw’ Motorcycle Subculture</b>	
	Youth Culture and the Media – an Introduction	36
	The Visual Media	40
	The Print Media	43
<b><u>Chapter Four:</u></b>	<b><i>Hell’s Angels</i>, Outlaws and the ‘Outlaw’ Motorcycle</b>	<b>50</b>
	The <i>Hell’s Angels M.C.</i>	50
	‘Outlaws’ and the Biker Image	56
	The Motorcycle	59
	Risk	65
	‘Hell’s Angels,’ Moral Panic and the Media	73
	Mods and Rockers and Moral Panic in the United Kingdom	75

	Conclusion	78
<b><u>Plates:</u></b>	<b>Plates 1-13</b>	
<b><u>Chapter Five:</u></b>	<b>The Mass Media and the Symbolic Construction of a Generic South Island (New Zealand) ‘Outlaw’ Biker Community</b>	<b>81</b>
	Introduction	81
	Youth Culture and the Evolution of the OMCs in New Zealand	83
	International Media and South Island OMCs	91
	Characteristics of South Island OMCs	104
	Conclusion	119
<b><u>Chapter Six:</u></b>	<b>Media, Police and Moral Panic</b>	<b>121</b>
	The ‘Big Blue Gang’ (South Island OMCs and the Police)	121
	The New Zealand Police and Moral Panic	129
	Conclusion	144
<b><u>Chapter Seven:</u></b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>146</b>
	<b>Footnotes:</b>	<b>155</b>
	<b>Glossary:</b>	<b>165</b>
	<b>References:</b>	<b>167</b>

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**Dave Haslett 2/07**

## **List of Plates**

**Plate 1:** *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga* (1966)

**Plate 2:** *Bikers: Birth of a Modern-Day Outlaw* (1985)

**Plate 3:** Taken from Yates: *Outlaw Machine: Harley-Davidson and the Search for the American Soul* (1999)

**Plate 4:** *The Wild One* (1954)

**Plate 5:** Taken from Yates: *Outlaw Machine: Harley-Davidson and the Search for the American Soul* (1999)

**Plate 6:** Robin Stummer, *The Independent on Sunday*, News Section 3, UK (4<sup>th</sup> April 2004)

**Plate 7:** *Easy Rider* (1969)

**Plate 8:** Peter Cave: *Chopper: England's King of the Angels* [1971] (1995)

**Plate 9:** *The Saturday Evening Post*, November 20 1965

**Plate 10:** Map of New Zealand and Chatham Islands

**Plate 11:** Stanley Cohen's: *Folks Devils and Moral Panics* [1972] (2002)

**Plate 12:** "Hell's Angel" – Fred Collett, 1929 Harley-Davidson 750cc Colt, Gore Southland (New Zealand) circa 1949-1950

**Plate 13:** 'Bikies – Palmerston', 'Canta', University of Canterbury 1972

# Chapter One

## Introduction

“There’s a race of men that don’t fit in,  
A race that can’t stay still;  
So they break the hearts of kith and kin,  
And they roam the world at will”.

*The Men That Don’t Fit In.*  
Robert Service  
(1874 – 1958)

1. **Aims of the thesis:**

The basic question that motivated this thesis was originally as follows:

How (the extent to which) international film, literature, media reports and photographic images (circa 1950 – 1975) have influenced the generic identity adopted by ‘outlaw’ motorcycle clubs in New Zealand.

The focus of my research is on how a number of New Zealand ‘outlaw’ bikers have interpreted international mass media representations of ‘outlaw biker culture between 1950 – 1975. This time-span was carefully chosen after considerable research, consultation and reflection. It encompasses a period when New Zealand experienced rapid development of a global mass media, where cultural images were routinely communicated internationally in (relatively) real time. I will argue that the globalisation of the mass media was integral to the evolution of the generic New Zealand ‘outlaw’ biker social identity that we now see in outlaw motorcycle clubs across New Zealand in 2007. In saying that, as my research progressed, it became evident to me that there is no simple relationship between media and outlaw biker identity, and that the issue is far more complex than it first appeared to be. Whilst I consciously attempted to remain focussed on my chosen thesis topic, I found it necessary from time-to-time to factor in other aspects of outlaw biker culture to make meaning of what I was being told, and what I was observing during my protracted interaction with my participants. I found that whilst some international media representations were significant to the construction of ‘outlaw biker’ identity in New Zealand, other obvious ‘outlaw’ biker material was arguably more influential in creating a

public perception of what the 'outlaw' biker lifestyle represents for 'others,' than it was in influencing how the 'outlaw' bikers saw themselves.

One of the more contentious arguments that I will develop in this thesis is that law enforcement agencies had a direct role in the construction of the international generic outlaw biker identity, and that they continue to unwittingly reinforce outlaw biker stereotypes in the mass media today. In fact, this suspicion and friction is often played out through the mass media. I will use the term 'club' instead of 'gang' throughout my thesis, because this is the term that the clubs use (Veno 2003: 65). OMCs consider the term 'gang' to be a law enforcement term (Veno 2003: 66). As a *Hell's Angel* observed to Veno (2003), "... it's used to try to make us worse than what we are ... Once a club becomes a gang, then the police can get all the support from the citizens they need" (Veno 2003: 66). I will explore the uneasy relationship between outlaw motorcycle clubs (OMCs) and law enforcement agencies at some length to argue that suspicion and friction between them is an important factor in the construction of the social identity of both groups (Jenkins 1996: 163, Veno 2003: 212 – 229, 263). I will directly address the way in which law enforcement spokespersons sometimes use the media to create moral panic so as to strategically polarize OMCs in their community. I will also briefly address the role that law enforcement officers play in influencing the collective memory of other law enforcement officers, and their role in urban mythmaking, often via the mass media. Essentially I will be arguing that law enforcement spokespersons are considered to be persons 'in authority' and to possess 'inside' knowledge, and are therefore seen to be reliable sources of public information (Veno 2003: 57–8).

The 'outlaw' biker sub-culture has proven to be a particularly complex one for researchers to make meaning of, as most of the core material produced to date has been of an etic nature. I will discuss specific examples of this material in greater detail later. There is a paucity of authoritative, objective material that had been written with insider knowledge by current or former outlaw bikers. Much of the material that could be described as emic has



been written by club members and associates who have left their clubs for personal reasons (become Christians, etcetera), or by persons who have left their clubs ‘in bad standing’ (Lavigne 1999: 427 – 428, 430, Winterhalder 2005). A number of the more influential accounts have been written by or about people who have been thrown out of their clubs, or have opted to give evidence against their former associates to save their own skins (Wethern 1978, Lavigne 1996, Martineau 2003). A few are carefully sanitized biographies or autobiographies of celebrity outlaw bikers (Barger 2000, 2002, Zito 2002). Such accounts are often somewhat subjective, and tend to be self indulgent and self-serving. I will discuss a number of published biographies or autobiographies of current and former ‘outlaw’ bikers to illustrate this point.

At this juncture, the popular culture literature that directly relates to ‘outlaw’ biker sub-culture is over-represented by etic accounts, and under-represented by dispassionate, authoritative emic accounts. However, two accounts that I will argue remain valid today are Hunter S. Thompson’s (1966) seminal ‘etic’ book, *Hell’s Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga* (**Plate 1**), and Kent (UK) *Hell’s Angel* Ian ‘Maz’ Harris’s ‘emic’ book, *Bikers: Birth of a Modern-Day Outlaw* (1985), which was based on his PhD treatise (**Plate 2**). Thompson, an influential free-lance journalist, observed and socialised with the Californian *Hell’s Angels* for more than a year in the mid 1960s, forming strong associations with several of the Angels who he considered to be friends. Harris, an influential bikers-rights advocate in the UK, had spent most of his adult life as a *Hell’s Angel* before his untimely death in a motorcycle accident in 2000.

I will attempt to define certain aspects of ‘outlaw’ biker culture as I progress through my body of work, to both assist the reader, and to illustrate the arguments that I intend to make. I must however reiterate that it was necessary for me to restrict my focus to my chosen research topic, so I will not be able to adequately deal with many other important aspects of outlaw biker culture within this thesis. To that end, my central anthropological focus will be on social identity, globalisation and the media.

This thesis should therefore be read as an analysis of a particular aspect of ‘outlaw’ biker ‘social identity,’ and not as an account of the overall ‘outlaw biker’ sub-culture.

2. **The generic OMC image and identity:**

The emergence of some sub-cultures has and will continue to have a considerable impact upon the greater society. Abercrombie, *et al* (2000) argue that a subculture is:

... a system of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and lifestyles of a social group within a larger whole, whether that is a whole society or an organization. Potentially the term can be used for any social group, but is applied most commonly to deviant or youth cultures that possess a culture opposed to the dominant culture of the larger whole (Abercrombie *et al* 2000: 349).

Abercrombie, *et al* discusses Becker’s (1963) observations about marijuana users. They observe that Becker had argued the Marijuana users that he observed had, “... formed a subculture with developed rituals, slang, and ways of behaving which emphasized the differences between and the wider society” (Abercrombie *et al* 2000: 349). Some of the lexicon that is developed by significant subcultures will often eventually be assimilated into the vocabulary of the greater society

OMCs fit easily into the definition of a subculture, as they are united by their dress, attitudes and tastes in opposition to the dominant culture (Abercrombie, *et al* 2000: 349, Veno 2003: 40). They have developed an international generic organizational template, together with symbols, rituals and elements of a language that are readily identifiable to the wider society as being associated with the OMC subculture. Abercrombie *et al* (2000) contend that post-modern society is simply composed of large numbers of subcultures that are differentiated from each other by their lifestyles (Abercrombie *et al* 2000: 349).

There have been named “renegade” or ‘outlaw’ motorcycle clubs in the South Island of New Zealand since the mid-late 1960s, although there were earlier loose-knit groups of motorcycle riders who would have fitted that description for want of a name (Veno 2003: 29).<sup>1</sup> Veno (2003) argues that ‘patched’ “renegade” motorcycle clubs can not really be considered to be ‘outlaw’ clubs until they consciously embrace “the 1 per cent tag”, which

will be explained later (Veno 2003: 28 - 9). Veno (2003) argues, “a simple way to look at it is an outlaw biker is a bikie” (2003: 40). He goes on to argue:

These clubs are characterised by having a constitution, a rigid organisational structure and heavy levels of commitment to ensure their survival. They exist in their own world, cut off from mainstream society through a rigid system of rules and inherent belief system. Because of this, I’ve always considered them a subculture, and my studies reflect this (Veno 2003: 40).

So we constantly need to remind ourselves that not all of those engaged in the subculture are ‘outlaw’ bikers, and not all motorcycle ‘clubs’ are OMCs.

Few subcultures in society can elicit the immediate knee-jerk response that OMCs seem to be able to provoke from members of the greater community. The sight or mention of OMCs often evokes feelings of unease, fear, anger, revulsion, distain, ambivalence or empathy. There appears to be little middle ground. To some, these are the barbarian hordes that they have long suspected are clustered just over the horizon – deviant, potentially dangerous outlaw savages who recklessly ride their large motorcycles at the margins of our society, and would not want it any other way (Lynch 1965: 6 – 10, Thompson 1966: 47, 96, 130, 141 – 3, Wilde 1977: 23, Harris 1985: 7-9, Veno 2003: 216 – 20).

Commentators have romanticised, demonised and moralised about ‘outlaw bikers’ since the sub-culture emerged in the late 1940s – “They’re the Wild Bill Hickoks, the Billy the Kids – they’re the last American heroes we have, man” (the cartoonist/publisher Ed ‘Big Daddy’ Roth, cited in Thompson 1966: 60). Authors routinely use the evocative terms ‘brothers’ and ‘brotherhood’ in the titles and subtitles of books, articles and treatises, as well as the terms ‘wild, savages, barbarians, outlaws, outsiders,’ and ‘menace’ to reference the public perception of OMCs (Hudson 1966, Wilde 1977, Harris 1985, Simpson and Harvey 1989, Wolf 1991, Bowe 1994, Fuglsang 1997, Veno 2003). Most members of mainstream society have an opinion about OMCs, regardless of the depth of their knowledge, or their personal reference points. The perpetual debate that is regularly played out in the media about their right to exist in polite society, and their perceived level

of criminality is a constant reminder of the old adage that we do not need a lot of fact to fuel our prejudices about some of the ‘others’ in our society (Thompson 1966: 31 – 41, Veno 2003: 81 – 2, 237). In fact, however, as this thesis attempts to demonstrate, OMCs often represent a society of men who seek to live their lives according to an ‘outlaw’ honour code that is arguably far closer to the values that are espoused by the greater society than most of us appreciate, or care to acknowledge (Conte 1969, Harris 1985; Thompson 1966; Cohen and Wollock 2001, Veno 2003).<sup>2</sup>

OMCs clubs are multifaceted, complex organizations that can be understood and interpreted at many different levels. Whilst the reality is that some clubs and club members are actively involved in criminal enterprises, they cannot be dismissed easily as deviant groups of disaffected criminals who are loosely engaged in a profane culture that has no relevance to the greater society. Above all, outlaw biker society is predicated on one central tenet – the ethos of biker ‘brotherhood’ (Thompson 1966, Harris 1985, Veno 2003). The outlaw biker sub-culture therefore tends to be somewhat romanticised in some segments of the media as representing the last free-spirited individuals in our society who blur social boundaries by consciously choosing to live their lives at the margins of society, with scant regard for convention (Veno 2003: 32 - 41). How the ‘outlaw’ bikers see themselves was perhaps best articulated by *Hell’s Angel*, ‘Maz’ Harris, when he chose the title for his account of OMC subculture – *Bikers: Birth of a Modern-Day Outlaw* (1985). In his treatise, Harris argued that, ‘outlaw’ bikers were only following the examples of earlier generations of restless men who also chose to live their lives at the margins of their respective societies – arguing, as the poet Robert Service had (about Alaskan gold miners) - that outlaw bikers too are “a race of men that don’t fit in” (Harris 1985: 9, Service 1989: 42). Jenks (2003) notes an ‘extreme seductiveness’ surrounds transgression – ‘a longing for rebelliousness and unaccountability’ (Jenks 2003: 132). Because of the rather ‘free-spirited’ type of individuals drawn to this lifestyle, outlaw biker ‘1%er’ clubs are a magnet to those who see themselves as being somewhat dislocated from mainstream society, or who crave notoriety, adventure, or camaraderie. ‘Outlaw’ bikers often see themselves as

‘outlaws’ - throwbacks to earlier times (Haris 1985: 7-9). Birney Jarvis (1966), a charter member of the Californian *Hell’s Angels*, who later became a *San Francisco Chronicle* police reporter observed, “These guys are outlaw types who should have been born a hundred years ago – then they would have been gun fighters” (Thompson 1966: 14).

OMCs are often referred to in the regional and international mass media as ‘bike’, ‘bikie’, or ‘biker gangs’, ‘motorcycle gangs’, ‘outlaw motorcycle gangs’, or sometimes ‘1%er gangs’. There are regional variations to this generic labelling, such as ‘Rockers,’ a term primarily used in the United Kingdom and Europe, or the term ‘Les Motards,’ used both in France and Quebec, Canada, to generically reference motorcycle ‘gangs.’ Most of these regional terms however are generic labels routinely used by the mass media, law enforcement and others, but are not terms that are often used by the bikers themselves.<sup>3</sup> All OMCs invariably choose to reference their particular groupings as ‘clubs,’ ‘the club,’ or a derivation of their individual club name (‘the Angels,’ ‘the Epitaphs,’ or ‘the Eps,’ etcetera). Sometimes this reference is more enigmatic, such as the term ‘81’s’ to reference the *Hell’s Angels M.C.* (See Glossary). The global or trans-national variations of these clubs are generally indicated by the bottom ‘rocker’ of the outlaw biker’s colours, that will either name the member’s country, or the city where his chapter is situated, if there are several chapters in that country, although this can vary between clubs.

OMCs adopt a style of dress that is internationally recognisable. Whilst there are regional variations, all OMCs tend to subscribe to the North American template that has been defined (and refined) by the monopolistic *Hell’s Angels M.C.* Central to the outlaw biker’s individual and club identity is his club ‘colours’ – the three-part club back-patch, for a fully patched member, or limited ‘prospect’ insignia, for those not yet fully patched (Veno 2003: 40 – 41). In earlier times, an all-leather look was fashionable, but later, clubs took to wearing their colours on the back panel of a sleeveless blue denim jacket, although some clubs choose to display theirs on a black leather sleeveless waistcoat or jerkin. Today, most New Zealand outlaw clubs have gravitated to wearing their colours on the

leather vest, although there are still a few traditionalists who continue to wear their colours affixed to the earlier denim ‘cut-off’ jacket (Jarrod Gilbert, pers. comm., 2006). The benefit of having easily removable colours is obvious (Veno 2003: 263). Associates and supporters (male and female) are permitted to wear supporter T-Shirts (‘Support Big Red Machine’ for *Hell’s Angels M.C.*; ‘Support Your Local Outlaws’ for *Outlaws M.C.*, etcetera), but are not permitted to wear any insignia that are restricted to those accepted as ‘prospects’, or fully ‘patched’ members. Any ‘civilian’ caught wearing anything resembling a back-patch can expect an instant, often violent response from members of the aggrieved club. The theft or attempted theft of a club member’s colours by another club may result in a violent response, and can sometime leads to extended periods of internecine warfare. The ‘colours’ represent ‘the club,’ and a particular identity, therefore they are to be fiercely defended (Veno 2003: 40–41). The taking of club colours precipitated a considerable amount of internecine gang warfare between ‘outlaw’ motorcycle clubs throughout the South Island during the early to mid 70s, when several club members from various clubs were killed, or were seriously injured, some whilst directly in defence of their colours. I will discuss this aspect in greater detail in chapter five and six. Whilst the ‘outlaw’ biker places very high value on his club ‘colours,’ there is a downside to the wearing of ‘colours,’ as to some observers the wearer is now a highly visible symbol of outlaw deviance. The American singer/songwriter/activist, Steve Earle spoke of the wearing of an ‘outlaw brand’ in his cynical biker anthem ‘Justice in Ontario,’ a song taken from his (1990) album, *The Hard Way* when he wrote, “... Well one and all wore the outlaws’ brand, and the big bikes roared through the Great Northland, when you live on the edge of the law, you know, justice in Ontario.” What Earle was essentially arguing was that if you choose to wear ‘colours,’ you are making a conscious decision to set yourself apart from the ‘others’ in your community, and there may be a price that you ultimately have to pay for such a public statement.<sup>4</sup>

Variations of motorcycle ‘gang’ insignia have become *de rigueur* for any self-respecting biker who wants to reinforce his (or her) ‘hard-core’ biker identity to others. This ‘outlaw’

look is particularly popular with ‘Harley’ (*Harley-Davidson* motorcycle) riders, as the *Harley-Davidson* marketing machine has rather cynically capitalised on the ‘outlaw’ brand as a very successful marketing tool for their motorcycles, and their ‘outlaw chic’ biker clothing and accessories, whilst at the same time ostensibly distancing themselves from the true ‘1%er’ outlaw biker fraternity (Schouten and Alexander 1995: 43 – 62, Mark and Pearson 2001: 133 – 135, Veno 2003: 261).

Internationally, all OMCs incorporate the letters ‘M.C.’ (for ‘motorcycle club’) into their club names, and display these letters on all club insignia (for example, the *Hell’s Angels M.C.*, etcetera). Whilst the letters ‘M.C.’ following a club’s name does tend to indicate that the wearer is a member of an ‘outlaw’ motorcycle club, ‘M.C.’ can now also be seen on the ‘back patches’ and other club paraphernalia of some distinctly non-outlaw clubs. These clubs can range from Christian biker clubs to law enforcement and military clubs. Veno (2003) argues that the patched clubs “that hang around the edges of the 1%er clubs”, but are not by his definition ‘1%er’ clubs, and chooses to describe these fringe clubs as non-outlaw clubs with a specific common ethos (‘Christian’ etcetera), or refers to them as “10%er clubs” (Veno 2003: 63). He lists the *Vietnam Vets Motorcycle Club* and the *Ulysses* club as examples of “10%er clubs” (Veno 2003: 63).

Most outlaw bikers are accorded an individual club sobriquet relatively early in their club lives. These are nicknames, rather than assumed names, and are important to outlaw bikers, as it means that the club has accepted the holder (Veno 2003: 125). These nicknames generally remain with the individual throughout his active club life, and often beyond. Outlaw biker sobriquets that are chosen for associates and patched members by other club members are often wry, sometimes humorous acknowledgements of the individual’s ethnicity, mannerisms, personal habits or appearance (for example ‘Greasy’ for a perpetually grimy individual, ‘Tiny’ for a large individual, ‘Magoo,’ for a member who is considered to resemble the cartoon character, ‘Mr Magoo,’ etcetera). They are often of a macho nature. These nicknames often remain as their sobriquet, even if they

leave their club and subsequently take up with another club, if their club is absorbed into another stronger outlaw biker club and they 'patch-over' to that club's colours, or if they 'retire' from their club, as many eventually do. Bikers tend to have extensive social relationships with people that they tend to reference to others only by nickname.<sup>5</sup>

Despite outward appearances, outlaw biker clubs are generally highly organised intentional communities that are heavily regulated by club rules and regulations, and by the stated and implied social responsibilities that bond members to their clubs, and to their club brothers (Veno 2003: 86 – 110). Every outlaw biker community is characterised by the use of ritual and symbolism that confers full membership and helps to define its boundaries (Cohen, 1985: 50 – 63), and there is a degree of commonality in outlaw biker rituals and symbolism internationally that is well documented (Thompson 1966, Reynolds and McClure 1968, Harris 1985, Veno 2003). I will attempt to identify some of the origins of these rituals and symbols, and will argue that the mass media and globalisation have played a central role in the adoption of these practices internationally. I have included a 'glossary of terms' to assist the reader, as I progressively deal with biker rituals and symbols, and reference the international outlaw biker lexicon.

In subsequent chapters I will attempt to show the historical representation of outlaw motorcycle gangs in the mass media has helped to create the stereotypical outlaw biker image that was adopted in New Zealand. The OMC image is now instantly recognisable internationally. Whilst there may be some regional variations in the way in which outlaw bikers represent themselves and are represented by their local media, historical international media representations remain hugely influential in continuing to position OMCs at the margins of society (Fulsang 1997: 6 – 21, Veno 2003: 15, 81 – 82). The concept of the hero and the outlaw has its parallels in all societies. I will argue that the universal public perception of the 'outlaw' has helped mould the generic outlaw biker social identity into the 'deviant' 'folk-devil' figure that we see portrayed in the mass media today (Thompson 1998, Mark and Pearson 2001, Cohen 2002). Mass media



representations of outlaw motorcycle ‘gangs’ clearly can and do perpetuate stereotypes about outlaw bikers that are influential in the way ‘others’ view them and their alleged activities. These representations have become increasingly influential in how international law enforcement agencies have come to view and represent ‘outlaw’ biker clubs, both to other law enforcement personnel, and to the mass media (Veno 2003: 189). I found that a considerable amount of the international ‘outlaw’ biker material that I ultimately reviewed with my participants was viewed quite differently by those with ‘insider’ knowledge, than it was by those who were ‘outsiders’ (and who were attempting to analyse and represent the complex ‘outlaw biker sub-culture’ from a distance). Much of the more popular literature was in fact quite superficial and exploitative, and often failed to deal with the more complex issue of social identity that is arguably the nub of the outlaw biker sub-culture. As I will show, some international film, literature, media reports and photographic images have influenced the generic identity adopted by ‘outlaw’ motorcycle clubs in New Zealand, but local context has also been very important in this construction of outlaw biker identity. It became evident to me that the bikers who participated in this study went far beyond the obvious media representations of OMCs exercising agency to formulate their own self-concepts of their ‘outlaw biker’ identity. My more reflective participants nominated a far broader range of ideas, concepts, and philosophies that they felt influenced their own thinking about their social identity, and their chosen lifestyle, than had been immediately evident to me in my initial literature review.

As I noted earlier, ‘outlaw’ biker society is predicated on the concept of ‘brotherhood’ (with all of the accountabilities and responsibilities that such social relationships entail). Therefore, much of the material that my participants saw themselves as having influenced their individual self-conception and their generic identity, is directly related to their own individual understanding of what the concept of outlaw brotherhood actually means to them personally, and to their collective ‘outlaw biker’ sub-culture. Drawing attention to agency of this kind, which he referred to as a ‘profane creativity’, Paul Willis (1978) argued:

Real, bustling, startling cultures move. They exist. They are something in the world. They suddenly leave behind – empty, exposed, ugly – *ideas* of poverty, deprivation, existence and culture. Real events can save us much philosophy ... oppressed, subordinate or minority groups can have a hand in the construction of their own vibrant cultures and are not merely dupes: the fall guys in a social system stacked overwhelmingly against them and dominated by capitalist media and commercial provision (Willis 1978: 1 – 2).

### 3. **Methods:**

As indicated above, Willis argued that youth sub-cultures, like the ‘biker’ culture, were “living cultures” (constantly evolving), so set out to objectively deal with them in a similar manner to how I chose to carry out my fieldwork (Willis 1978 1 – 2, Chaney 1996: 130-2). He became absorbed in the youth sub-culture through association with participants, and was anxious to let his participant-informants have a voice in his narratives, and free rein in their individual ethnographies, by allowing them to rationalise their own lives from their personal perspective. Willis was arguably one of the earlier social scientists to attempt to deal with post-war youth sub-cultures by successfully alternating between etic observations and emic perspectives. A number of the historical international outlaw biker images are today considered by many commentators to be seminal images of outlaw biker deviancy. The aim of my fieldwork, following Willis, was to engage with participants who were actively involved in the ‘outlaw biker’ scene during the chosen period (1950 – 1975), or were in a position to observe it first hand, in a serious attempt to establish just how they themselves comprehended these international representations, and if and where they used them to formulate their regional self concepts. It was my intention to neither romanticize nor demonise the OMC sub-culture, nor to moralise about their chosen life style – criminality was of no real interest to me, unless it was pertinent to my research topic. To that end, I set out to dispassionately interview a cross-section of New Zealand society with personal knowledge/experience of the ‘outlaw’ motorcycle club sub-culture, and to analyse the international literature that pertains to ‘outlaw’ biker culture, in an attempt to establish just how influential ‘the mass media’ has been in promoting and sustaining this particular subcultures.

I chose my particular thesis topic primarily because I knew that researching historical aspects of outlaw biker sub-culture and lifestyle would be more likely to be viewed as non-threatening by the present and former members of New Zealand 'outlaw' clubs that I hoped to interview, than would a contemporary, more contentious 'outlaw' biker subject that may put others at risk. My project rather neatly dovetailed into an earlier honours year research project that I had carried out on outlaw biker 'brotherhood,' so I knew that outlaw bikers were generally happy to talk about historical matters that did not put others at risk, if they felt that the interviewer was genuinely interested. I was already acquainted with a number of older current and former 'outlaw' bikers, so I knew that I could find a pool of suitably well-informed participants easily enough.

I also had several personal reasons for selecting a non-threatening historical topic over a contemporary outlaw biker issue. I have had a long-standing interest in the 'outlaw' biker subculture that dates back to the mid 1960s. I grew up with young men who went on to join outlaw clubs, but I chose to take a slightly different direction, and worked as an operational police officer for almost 33 years. I joined the New Zealand Police in January 1968 as a 17-year-old cadet, and subsequently commenced operational policing at the port of Timaru (two hours south of Christchurch) in 1969, the day after my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. During this period, I routinely encountered young men of the same age as myself who were actively engaged in the outlaw motorcycle subculture. I subsequently transferred to Christchurch in August 1972, to commence training as a detective. I witnessed the increase in outlaw biker activity in Christchurch, and was present at the mass arrest of bikers at Kerrs Road, Christchurch in December of 1973. I subsequently took part in many of the investigative responses to the various incidents that occurred during the internecine biker war that occurred in Christchurch from August 1974 – March 1975. These included the investigation into the murder of a member of the *Devil's Henchmen M.C.* by an *Epitaph Rider* in Fitzgerald Avenue, Christchurch in December 1974, and the investigation that followed the highly public shooting incident that occurred outside the Lion Tavern in

Lincoln Road, Christchurch in January 1975, where a member of the *Devil's Henchmen M.C.* was seriously wounded and another badly beaten by two *Epitaph Riders*. These incidents are now enshrined in New Zealand outlaw biker folklore, so I felt that I had some insight into how outlaw motorcycle clubs operate, and their attitude to 'the other.'

I was very careful to remind my participants that I had formerly been a police detective, and took great care to discuss this prior knowledge with them to enable them to confirm or dispute any pre-conceived ideas that I had about specific incidents or events. In fact these 'shared' experiences opened more doors for me than they closed. I had also belatedly developed a strong personal friendship with an influential former 'outlaw' club member from the period, who generously vouched for my bona fides throughout this and my earlier honours project. This former patched member is a very well read, intelligent man, with a strong sense of history, a phenomenal memory, and a very clear understanding of what interested me, which greatly assisted me throughout this project. As it transpired, most of my participants were just as interested in my former life, as I was in theirs, which proved to be a great icebreaker. I was also fortunate to have accumulated a considerable personal collection of outlaw biker related literature over the years, and had taken the time to talk to many bikers during my lengthy police career, so I was already quite conversant with 'outlaw' biker history and folklore. These personal resources were supplemented by my participants' personal collections of biker memorabilia.

The bulk of my participants are current or former patched members of South Island outlaw motorcycle clubs. Some I had known for a number of years – others were newer acquaintances that I met through my initial, core participants. Over the past three to four years, I have progressively interacted with these participants, from casual conversations to lengthy individual or group discussions, to increasing socialisation, participant observation and then interview. In all, I have interacted closely with approximately fifteen individuals who are or have been associated with four separate South Island OMCs. I formally interviewed some of the more reflective individuals, whilst others were more useful

participants to observe while interacting with others. I socially interact with three on a very regular basis. Several others have now progressed to becoming regular, comfortable, casual acquaintances. Some are now regular drop-in visitors to my office (I am now a private investigator), for coffee, conversation and sometime for advice and assistance. A biker's life can be a very complex one!

I have socially interacted with these participants in many forums, ranging from reasonably regular leisurely Sunday breakfasts at a favourite breakfast restaurant with a core group of participants, to evening meals at a pizza restaurant with others, whenever we can fit it in. Often a core participant would bring potential participants from his old life along to meet me. I attended birthday parties, a patching anniversary, a slide evening (a historical collection of photographic images of the New Zealand biker scene that spans 40 years), motorcycle shows, racing events, rock concerts, and other social events with some of my participants. I have met some of their families, and their extended circle of friends – some of them have met mine. Many of those I interacted with were no longer patched members, although almost all maintained some form of social relationship with their former clubs, or at least with their former club mates. By happenstance, a University of Canterbury PhD candidate, sociologist Jarrod Gilbert, was also working on his 'History of New Zealand Gangs' project during the course of my current and earlier research projects. This was a windfall for me, as it allowed me ready access to an academic peer-mentor with a very good knowledge of the sub-culture, and an immediate peer review response, whenever I needed one.

I also chose to interview several current and former police officers with knowledge of outlaw motorcycle gangs, and closely monitored the contemporary police response to 'gangs' as I carried out my research. As I progressed, I found myself becoming increasingly comfortable with being around outlaw bikers, but also found myself becoming increasingly critical of some aspects of the generic approach that police took to policing 'gangs.' I will discuss this in greater detail when I deal with moral panic and mythmaking

in Chapter 6. However, in saying that, I was also genuinely impressed by the depth of knowledge of some of the more specialist police officers that I spoke to.<sup>6</sup>

I have carefully weighed and evaluated everything that my outlaw biker participants have told me throughout, to ensure that I do not compromise them in any way. Some disclosures that were made to me were not able to be included in this thesis, as they had the potential to compromise individuals. I have also deliberately spoken about some of the matters discussed in more general terms to mask the identity of my participants, or their respective clubs. Some have moved on and are now living anonymously in their respective communities, and wish to remain that way. Others are still embedded in the scene, but attempt to keep a low profile. None of those who have moved on are particularly ashamed of their earlier club lives, but many felt that they had worked very hard to make a legitimate life for themselves and their families, and therefore wanted to keep their earlier club lives separate from their contemporary family lives. Most continue to maintain a relationship with their old clubs and club mates, albeit selective and discrete. Thirty odd years have elapsed for some, yet all have vivid memories of their former club lives (despite the drug and alcohol abuse of some at the time!) But there are a limited number of potential participants from that era, so there remains the potential for participants to be more easily identified from the small numbers who were present at particular events, incidents, etcetera, as many of my participants know each other, despite their different club allegiances. Whilst some are aware that I have spoken to others (often with their assistance), it is expected that I will respect their wishes, and keep their identities and the identities of their respective clubs strictly confidential.

I started to write this thesis five years after my retirement from the police. This wind down period has allowed me to both consciously and subconsciously distance myself somewhat from my earlier police life, and to deal with my topic more dispassionately than I perhaps would have done earlier. I believe that my analyses of police procedures and practices are objective, well stated, and grounded in fact, but I have no doubt that some of my

observations will not sit well with some of my former police colleagues, who will likely see me as being somewhat disloyal (and probably disingenuous) in what I have to say. I have had numerous lively discussions with experienced former and serving police officers over the past two years about the role that police spokespersons arguably play in the promotion of moral panic and myth making. Whilst many initially bristled at the notion, most ultimately warmed to the argument after they had considered the evidence, and reconciled it to their personal experiences and observations.

I came to realise as I progressed with this project just how much the community relies on the mass media to inform them about what is happening in the greater community on a daily basis. I came to appreciate the considerable responsibility that persons who are quoted in the mass media on social issues, or who speak on behalf of government departments and agencies, have to fairly and accurately inform the greater community about social issues, crime and policing issues. I also came to appreciate their ability to influence public perceptions, particularly as it relates to the fear of crime.

This project has made me truly appreciate the role that globalisation and the mass media plays in the construction of social identity, particularly as it relates to the construction of a deviant subculture. OMCs, like any other 'organization' (including the Police), are complex organizations (Wright 1994: 3, Veno 2003: 212). Therefore, 'outlaw' bikers cannot be easily dismissed as disaffected, deviant individuals enjoined in a 'profane' subculture. OMCs continue to exist in an often-hostile environment at the margins of our society, largely because of their sense of an individual and collective social identity. I will therefore attempt to interpret for the reader just how outlaw bikers construct their social identity, and the role that the mass media, globalisation and agency plays in the symbolic construction of their outlaw biker communities. Whilst the central thrust of my thesis is to analyse an important aspect of 'outlaw' biker culture, my conclusions should not be seen as being restrictive to this sub-culture alone. I would argue that my research has considerable validity to any anthropologist who sets out to establish the impact of mass media

representations on public perceptions about any less-than-transparent sub-culture that operates within a greater society. I will argue that ‘outlaw’ motorcycle clubs are resistant communities that can help us to interpret how such sub-cultures define their boundaries in the symbolic construction of their ‘outlaw’ biker society. ‘Outlaw’ biker sub-culture can therefore be compared to a number of other sub-cultures that consciously resist attempts to have them conform to society’s norms, and to assimilate into the greater society. As our own society changes, and we experience the impact of recent increased immigration into New Zealand (as well as the continued ‘opting-out’ of segments of our existing society), we will likely see the emergence of even more sub-cultures, and sub-groupings, as groups of individuals attempt to define and make meaning of their social lives (and as they struggle to maintain their cultural identity within the all-pervasive greater society).

4. **Chapter outline:**

Having outlined the scope and aims of my thesis, and having presented an overview of the generic OMC image, I proceed in Chapter Two to a more detailed discussion of anthropology, the media and globalisation. Spitulnik (1993) observed:

Within the last five or so years, as anthropologists have increasingly struggled to define what falls within the legitimate realm of the study of “a culture” and within the privileged purview of “discipline” ... there has been a dramatic rise in interest in the study of mass media ... indeed, mass media themselves have been a contributing force in these processes of cultural and disciplinary deterritorialization ... (Spitulnik 1993: 293).

I deliberately chose the period 1950 – 1975, as it was a period when we witnessed a dramatic increase in representations of ‘the other’ in the international mass media that were transmitted to far-flung corners of a world through the process of globalisation. I then address the media and the construction of meaning, with particular reference to the increasing influence that the print and film media have had on how we view our world. I then proceed to a more in-depth discussion of globalisation, before I outline the remainder of my thesis.



In Chapter Three, I set the scene for the emergence of OMCs in New Zealand by looking at post-war youth culture and the media both in international contexts (USA and UK) and in New Zealand. Whilst New Zealand was geographically isolated, its inhabitants were being increasingly exposed to real time representations of a post-war youth culture increasingly at odds with those older members who were attempting to return their lives to normality after the privations of World-War II and the austerity years that followed. Against this background, I then discuss in some detail the international visual and the print media, as they respectively relate to the evolution of the international 'outlaw' biker subculture. Chapter Four relates to the role that the *Hell's Angels M.C.* have played in the evolution of the outlaw biker subculture. This is discussed in some detail, after which I analyse the concept of the 'outlaw,' before I discuss the role that the motorcycle has played in the construction of outlaw biker identity. This leads to a discussion of risk from an anthropological perspective, before I go on to specifically analyse the international media and the New Zealand 'outlaw' biker. This leads to a discussion on youth, popular culture and the episodes of widespread anxiety and fear triggered by apparently trivial events that are known as 'moral panics', before I analyse how the term 'Hell's Angel' has tended to become a generic reference in the media for all 'outlaw' bikers, in a discussion about 'Hell's Angels,' moral panics and the media.

Chapter Five deals with the mass media and the symbolic construction of a generic South Island (New Zealand) 'outlaw' biker community, with particular reference to the characteristics and regional adaptations observed in South Island OMCs. This chapter will address both the impact that globalisation has had on the evolution of OMCs in this remote region, and the way in which local factors impinged on the construction of OMC identity in the South Island.

In Chapter Six, I discuss the media, police and moral panic, with particular reference to the international and domestic media and real and perceived activities of South Island OMCs during the period. I develop Veno's concept of 'The Big Blue Gang,' where he argues that

OMCs regard the police as just another gang, “driven by the same motives as any other gang – power and domination”, to argue that the police are a ‘significant other’ to OMCs, along with politicians, the media and other OMCs or street gangs (Veno 2003: 212). I then discuss the role that the New Zealand Police has had (and continues to have) in the generation of periodic moral panics about the OMCs sub-culture found in this region. Central to this argument will be my contention that law enforcement spokespersons are widely considered to be persons in authority and are therefore seldom challenged on unsubstantiated and often sweeping generalisations made in the media about the real and perceived threats to law and order posed by OMCs. I will argue that ‘OMCs’ are in fact convenient ‘usual suspects,’ and a convenient metaphor for criminal deviance when police organizations are under pressure.

Chapter Seven brings the thesis to an end with a summary of the main findings.

## Chapter Two

### Anthropology, the Media and Groups at the Margins

“... mass media in some form or another have touched most societies,  
and indeed pervade the entire fabric of many.”

Debra Spitulnik (1993: 294)

#### 1. Media and the Construction of Meaning

The expression ‘the mass media’ has given rise to countless clichés in relation to ‘the masses’ (our supposed ‘mass’ society) and the function of the mass media, but it does not pinpoint any specific set of objects or practices. Sorlin (1994) notes that originally a medium was “...lying in a middle or intermediate position – an agent, an object through which a purpose is accomplished,” and that nowadays, “the media are the means by which information or entertainment are diffused” (Sorlin 1994: 3). He goes on to argue, “... Inasmuch as they inform, the media are part of the communication process, that is to say they are part of the special and unique process by which human communities are formed and in which they live” (Sorlin 1994: 5). A major aim of my thesis is to show how this applies to the OMCs in New Zealand’s South Island in the period 1950 – 1975.

The American mass communications expert, Professor Ross Fuglsang (1997) argued in his PhD thesis, ‘Motorcycle Menace: Media Genres and the Construction of a Deviant Culture,’ that the media is a meaning-making institution. I will argue that the international mass media has been the primary conduit for the transmission of the contemporary North American ‘outlaw’ biker template to the rest of the world, and thereby arguably played an important role in the construction of an international ‘outlaw’ biker community. Fuglsang (1997) observed (in his abstract):

... Over time the outlaw myth grew to encompass more than a one-dimensional stereotype. It is varied in its message and, depending on the context, can represent an attitude and lifestyle to be admired, despised, feared or emulated by both men and women. As uniquely qualified non-conformists, bikers were made to order for the media’s penchant for addressing the various definitions of deviance and

communicating at any given time just where the line is between obeying the law and stepping out of bounds ...  
(Fulsang 1997: abstract).

Sorlin (1994) introduces the post-modern term 'deconstructionism' to argue that social sciences often tend to consider a topic too large to think about as a whole, so the only recourse is to deal with it piecemeal (Sorlin 1994: 10-11). He observes that contemporary cultural studies are influenced by deconstructionism, "which tends to stress the changes in the reception situation, which characterize the end of the twentieth century" (Sorlin 1995: 25). In other words, Sorlin is arguing that the way in which we receive information via the mass media constantly changes as technology and society changes. He argues, "Readers/viewers, it is assumed, are all the more obliged to exercise their capacity for interpretation in that they are surrounded by more and more different messages" (Sorlin 1994: 25). He comments that this is an interesting assumption for which there is no proof, as a century ago, people still had access to many newspapers, and other media, including books, posters, etcetera (Sorlin 1994: 25 – 6). He argues that the difference is that news in an earlier era tended to focus more on local or regional issues than on global issues (Sorlin 1994: 26). What he is essentially arguing is that where this changed was when audiences changed, and the media focussed us on more complex international issues. Sorlin argues that in this process of globalisation, "the most visible communities are what we can call 'global communities' like nations, classes and tribes, which have a certain degree of permanence and stability, and very often, also have institutions" (Sorlin 1994: 35 – 6).

However, he cautions:

There is still a danger of overestimating the cohesion of these communities which are mostly frameworks in which other groups, sometimes institutionalised, more often fluid and ephemeral, come out, overlap and vanish. Society as we understand it, according to Tonnies' assumption, is a permanent contact and interaction between unrelated groups which, nevertheless, influence each other since their members participate, simultaneously, in different aggregations. Life in communities, however spontaneous they are, relies on the possibility of communication about something to all participants. In all groups, be they totally transient, we find a collection of data, true or false, embellished or simplified, which enables the members to come together and strike up conversations, frequently purposeless ones, but always necessary, since they make up the soundtrack, the background fabric

behind their collective actions. This cluster of facts, images and memories is partially forged by the associates and it comes, as well, from outside, especially from the media (Solins, 1994: 35 – 36).

In other words, important as global media might be, it is only one factor in the construction of local community identity. We need to bear this in mind as we progress.

## 2. **Anthropology, the media and globalisation**

As globalisation makes the world smaller, cultures that were once relatively distant and insulated from each other are increasingly coming into contact. McLuhan (1964) spoke of the world as a ‘global village’ (McLuhan 1964: 5; Waters 1995: 12). Peterson (2003) observes that until recently, anthropologists have “done an astonishing good job” of ignoring the mass media (Peterson 2003: 2). In fact, in 1993, Spitulnik wrote, “... there is as yet no anthropology of mass media” (Spitulnik 1993: 293). Peterson (2003) observed, “... there had been one, briefly, but it was gone” (Peterson 2003: 56). He goes on to observe, “... for twenty-five years, anthropological output on mass media had been sporadic, and the works that had emerged were disconnected from one another, as well as from the work being done in other disciplines” (Peterson 2003: 56). Peterson also notes that, “... like many other social sciences, anthropology is struggling to come to terms with the changing nature of the social world in the age of globalization” (Peterson 2003: 15). This observation has been endorsed by a number of other anthropologists, including Kearney (1995), Appadurai (1996), and Gupta and Ferguson (1997). Peterson (2003) however observed, “... a new anthropology of mass media was, however, rapidly emerging, taking as its foci the construction of difference, media production outside the industrialized west, and attention to the role of mass media in the construction of identities” (Peterson 2003: 56). He notes:

... anthropologists have always recognised the tension between cultural representations (myth, ritual, media) and social formations (families, communities, polities). But they have also significantly focused on systems of exchange as the third leg of a theoretical triad. (Peterson 2003: 15).

Peterson observes that not all scholars agree with the positioning of mass media as part of an expressive culture. Geertz (1973), for instance, described public and expressive aspects

of culture as “where we show ourselves to ourselves” (Peterson 2003: 19). However, the mass media has an important role in social transformation, in particular, the “increasing collapse of perceptions of time and space that are labelled post modernity and globalization” (Peterson 2003: 24). Peterson (2003) goes on to observe:

The circulation of media and its incorporation into multiple spheres of everyday life has become simultaneously a principle vehicle for the flow of ideas and symbols across time and space, but also one of the dominant signs of the modernities it produces.  
Peterson 2003: 24)

The globalization of the mass media has engaged us all in media rituals and social dramas, as we consume mediated events. Peterson notes that the social ritual approach to mass media derives from the work of Victor Turner, “... who understood the social to be constructed through the production of persons, particularly in ritual” (Peterson 2003: 240, Turner 1969). This notion that media is part of the ritual process is not new (Peterson 2003: 241).

Ang, (2002), in his enthusiastic endorsement of Ginsburg *et al* (2002) *Media Worlds: anthropology on new terrain*, observes, “... we cannot understand our lives and societies without understanding the media-scapes we inhabit” (Ang 2002: in back-cover-notes of Ginsburg *et al*). Spitulnik (2003), in her overview of the mass media observes:

One enduring concern is “the power” of mass media, and in particular their roles as vehicles of culture. For example, in some approaches, mass media are analysed as forces that provide audiences with ways of seeing and interpreting the world, ways that ultimately shape their very existence and participation within a given society ... this is a compelling argument for anthropologists, especially its strong resonance with Anderson’s (sic) notion of the imagined community as a mass mediated collectivity where members may not know each other, but where each shares the idea of a common belonging ...  
(Spitulnik 2003: 295).

Giddens (1990) emphasises that relations between the global and local are always dialectical. “Local transformation is as much a part of globalization as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space (Giddens 1990: 64, Peterson 2003: 266). Peterson (2003) observes, “...indeed, globalization is essentially about the connections

between localities and the ways these connections influence one another” (Peterson 2003: 266). He goes on to argue:

...the key point is the ideas about the local - the Nation, the neighbourhood, the home – never ceases to exist in globalization. On the contrary, they often take on a new importance ... globalization is thus not about the disappearance of the local but about the linking of locales (Peterson 2003: 266).

Sociologists have adopted the term ‘glocalization’ from the marketing strategies of global companies, which “introduce minor modifications into global products for different local markets, to comply with local tastes” (Abercrombie *et al* 2000: 155). As a process, it refers to the globalization of the local, and the localization (glocalization) of the global. Glocalization has received considerable attention from anthropologists in more recent times. Essentially, glocalization is the appropriation of global images by local groups who have refashioned such images in terms of local circumstances and contexts and have given them meanings that are strictly local. Two well-known examples of glocalization from an anthropological perspective are the ethnographic studies of Trobriand cricket (“an ingenious response to Colonialism”) in the Trobriand Islands off the eastern tip of New Guinea (Kildea and Leach 1976), and some analysis of aspects of material cultures (for example, Daniel Miller’s (ed) (1998) ‘Coca-Cola: a black sweet drink from Trinidad’).

I will reference a number of examples of international and regional representations of outlaw biker culture that have been central to many recent attempts to identify the genesis of this complex sub-culture, in an attempt to analyse the validity of these representations against the bikers’ own perceptions of what their ‘outlaw’ biker culture actually means to them. These will include influential books, films and photographic images that are frequently used in contemporary attempts to analyse the genesis and evolution of outlaw motorcycle club sub-culture.

The sub-culture that I have chosen for my research, OMCs, has been subjected to considerable international media scrutiny since the late 1940s. This increased interest has led to the production of a considerable number of books and films dating from the mid

1950s, that have generally exploited the prevailing etic perception that all outlaw bikers are essentially representative of a negative, deviant sub-culture. The international interest in this subculture has resulted in the promulgation of a number of 'outlaw' biker images that are instantly identifiable across the globe. Two examples are the *Life* magazine photograph of the 'deviant' biker that was taken at the infamous Hollister riot in 1947 (**plate 3**), and the poster image of Marlon Brando's surly biker character, 'Johnny,' from Stanley Kramer's (1954) movie, *The Wild One* (**plate 4**)<sup>1</sup>.

The on-going analysis of how people make meaning of their lives is at the core of most social or cultural anthropological research. However, as Kelly Askew (2002) argues:

Anthropology, long the self-appointed interpreter of and representative for cultural "Others," no longer holds privileged access to cross-cultural knowledge (not that it ever fully did). Nor do anthropologists serve as the primary interlocutor or advocates for the communities with whom we engage in experiments of mutual comprehension. Anthropologists remain committed to the pursuit of ethnographic knowledge and cross-cultural understanding, but it is CNN, Hollywood, MTV and other global media that now present and represent cultures to the majority of our world. Local communities from Africa to America to Australia and everywhere in between catch their first glimpses of distant lifestyles through images in print, on television screens, and on celluloid (Askew 2002: 1).

She goes on to argue that media anthropology is now a legitimate sub-field within anthropology, and critiques how mass media are employed to represent and construct cultures, both Western and non-Western. There is an increasing interest in the social sciences in the anthropology of the mass media. The current view is that audiences are active in selecting, and often rejecting, media opinions, although recent work tends to suggest some compromise between these two (Abercrombie *et al* 2000: 338). 'Outlaw biker brotherhood' is the primary theme in almost all of the early media representations of 'outlaw' biker sub-culture that I traversed with my participants. I will argue that New Zealand 'outlaw' bikers readily accepted this representation of international fraternalism, voraciously devouring international images of 'outlaw' biker activity as they sought to define and refine their own 'outlaw' biker identity. As evidence of this, I will discuss a number of influential 'biker' publications from the 60s and early 70s that have now become



part of 'outlaw biker' folklore. A number of the practices luridly described in detail in these early publications have been influential in enshrining dubious and dated information in manuals and papers written by law enforcement officers specifically for law enforcement training purposes. A number of these earlier publications were in fact cobbled together from media reports and 'urban myth', and were written by formula writers using pseudonyms. Some of these examples of biker pulp fiction, such as Peter Cave's (1971) *Chopper: England's King of the Angels*, and (1972) *Mama*, and Mick Norman's (1973 - 1974) 'Angel Chronicles' have now achieved a cult status. I intend to traverse this material to illustrate just how this type of 'pulp' media has influenced attitudes to outlaw bikers, which I will argue has ultimately precipitated a defiant and resistant response from the bikers themselves, who often consciously adopted a 'bad-boy' image when 'performing' in public places.

3. **The Anthropology of marginalised and 'outsider' groups:**

'Outlaw' bikers are a global phenomenon and are now widely represented in popular culture, having survived and flourished as a subculture in sometime hostile environments. The globalisation of images via the media has resulted in iconic sub-cultural figures now being viewed by segments of the wider community as symbols of personal freedom and nonconformity (for example, the internationally recognised *Hell's Angel M.C.* elder-statesman, Ralph 'Sonny' Barger, and the celebrity New York *Hell's Angel* Chuck Zito). Some individuals remain involved with their respective clubs for life, so the sub-culture cannot be easily described as a predominantly 'youth' sub-culture. 'Outlaw' bikers appear to adhere to a complex and defined 'outlaw' code that defines its own margins, and reject some of those espoused by the greater society, by willingly embracing a public persona that is attractive to some, but repellent to other segments of mainstream society. Lastly, contemporary outlaw biker sub-culture is now over represented by a considerable amount of sometimes dubious, often romanticised, and at times downright spurious body of academic and other literature. Much of this 'biker' literature tends to make rather generalised sweeping statements about a complex lifestyle. Some of the better-known

earlier publications have been very influential in how a wide range of interested parties now view outlaw biker culture. What is of particular concern is that these 'exposés' are now widely accepted without question as fact, and are oft repeated by other authors and academics. They are also routinely referenced by influential 'outsider' spokespersons without any assessment of their accuracy or authenticity, which has tended to perpetuate urban myths and less than objective analyses of outlaw biker life.

One reason for choosing this topic is that there is an increasing anthropological interest in youth sub-cultures, intentional communities or 'urban tribes,' particularly in groups that deliberately position themselves at the margins of our society (Bourgois 2003, Wolf 1991). The validity of this modern approach to anthropological research conducted 'wherever it occurs' was recognised by The Royal Anthropological Institute in their *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines* initiative that clearly illustrates the contributions that anthropology can make to an analysis of contemporary society (MacClancy 2002). In sociological terms, the 'outlaw' motorcycle subculture is generally considered to be a deviant or profane subculture. Two important sociological treatises from the period that dealt specifically with 'profane' or 'deviant' cultures, and which were therefore influential in my research are Howard S. Becker's (1973) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, and Paul Willis' (1978) *Profane Cultures*. Becker's seminal work signalled the break in mainstream sociology and the subsequent adaptation of what came to be known as a interactionist, and later, a 'transactional' or labelling' perspective (Hall and Jefferson, 1993: 5). 'Labelling theory' essentially means that sociological explanations of deviance treat it as a product, not of individual psychology or of genetic inheritance, but of social control (Abercrombie *et al* 2000: 189). Abercrombie *et al* (2000) argue:

... The theory is constituted essentially by two propositions. The first is that deviant behaviour is to be seen not simply as the violation of a norm, but as any behaviour which is successfully defined or labelled as deviant. The deviance does not inhere in the act itself but in the response of others to that act. The second proposition claims that labelling produces or amplifies deviance. The deviant's response to societal reaction leads to secondary deviation by which the deviant comes to accept a self-image or self-definition as someone who is permanently locked within a deviant role. The distinctiveness of the

approach is that it draws attention to deviance as the outcome of social imputations and the exercise of social control ... (Abercrombie *et al* 2000: 189).

They go on to observe that labelling theory has proven to be ‘a fruitful’ development of sociological understanding of the relationship between deviance, self-conceptions, social reaction and control. I will argue that whilst segments of mainstream society will often perceive OMCs as deviant and profane because of the way they are portrayed in the global and regional media, glocalization invariably plays an important role in how the ‘outlaw’ biker perceives himself and others.

Two important anthropologists who have contributed to anthropological research on marginalized groups are Judith Okely (1983), and Philippe Bourgois (2003). Okely’s research on gypsy-traveller society has considerable applicability to this particular research project. She sets out in her book *The Traveller-Gypsies*, to challenge popular accounts that suggest that Gypsy communities were once isolated from the greater society, and thus enjoyed a culture and economy that has now largely been eroded by the processes of industrialisation and western capitalism. Okely used the perspective of social anthropology to argue that Gypsies have never been independent of a larger society and economy, but are an ethnic group that resists efforts to assimilate them into the larger society. Their life-style and practices are therefore related to the symbolic construction of their Traveller-Gypsy communities and the construction of a boundary between themselves and others. These ‘symbolic constructions’ can range from how they interact with the wider community, to how they arrange their living spaces and their exacting cleanliness rituals, to their dress, clannish-ways and their stubborn retention of their own unique language.

Okely’s extensive fieldwork with Traveller-Gypsy communities is very relevant to my research, in that she chose to carry out her fieldwork amongst a group of marginalised people living within the greater society, who were largely misunderstood, and were the subject of considerable suspicion and prejudice. This too was a group that had been

subjected to concerted efforts in the past to either assimilate them into the greater society, or failing that, to disrupt, disperse, or destroy their way of life. All efforts had failed. I found this book invaluable for this and my earlier honours years project on outlaw biker brotherhood, as aspects of Traveller-Gypsy culture had considerable parallels with the outlaw biker subculture, given that hardcore outlaw bikers are driven by the same motivation to live their lives by their own sub-cultural codes of conduct. Okely (1983) discusses the gypsy-travellers' attitude to 'Gorgios,' which is their collective term for non-Gypsy 'outsiders', or strangers (Okely 1983: 1-2). The Gypsy-Travellers' division between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' is very similar to that found in OMCs – an outsider may be made welcome, and may be exposed to aspects of outlaw biker life, but outlaw biker brotherhood is predicated on 'insider' brotherhood – therefore the insider retains 'inside' knowledge that only an insider can really know about just what the culture means to those emersed in it. This attitude is not unique to OMCs – many members of service organizations espouse a similar view (for example, operational police officers). Okely's important treatise reinforces the fact that Gypsy-Traveller communities, like outlaw biker communities, are 'intentional communities' – communities of like minded people bonded together by a common purpose, a community reinforced by collective behaviour (Brown 2002: 5–6; 131). This form of sub-cultural community is today often referred to as 'tribal.' The New-Age guru, Ethan Watters (2003) argues that he and his friends have formed an "urban tribe...an intricate community of young people who live and work together in various combinations, perform regular rituals, and provide the same kind of support as an extended family" (Watters 2003: flyleaf). This is a more than adequate description of what my participants claim they were afforded by their membership in their respective OMCs.

Bourgois's (2003) *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* has redefined urban anthropological research. His cutting-edge fieldwork amongst inner-city crack dealers demonstrates the validity of recording how participants actually see themselves in the terms of their own society. Bourgois's ethnographic study of social marginalisation is significant to my research, as he allows his participants to have a voice as they described

their bleak, albeit complex lives in their own terms. What is significant to me about both books is that Okely and Bourgois are careful not to romanticise, moralise, trivialise or demonise as they record their participant's complex lives. Both take their research to their participants, and allow their participants to describe their worlds from an emic perspective.

I also revisited Daniel Wolf's (1991) *The Rebels: A Brotherhood of Outlaw Bikers* as an obvious starting point. Wolf, then a "psychological anthropology" student, "rode" with the Canadian *Rebels M. C.* for a period whilst researching his anthropology thesis (Wolf 1991: Acknowledgements, 349, Veno 2003: 18). Wolf's book contains considerable ethnographic detail and theoretical insights, including his valuable observation that small, tight-knit groups such as the *Rebels M.C.* can encompass a wide range of diversity in terms of personality, beliefs and values, but this diversity is often camouflaged for the sake of group solidarity by symbols, rituals and shared expectations about public group behaviour (Wolf 1991: 344-49). The book contains some useful information about a club that has now been absorbed into the *Hell's Angels M.C.*, but I am mindful of a review of Wolf's book that was published by *Amazon.ca* in July 2000. The reviewer, who claims to have been a Rebels 'prospect' in the 80s, observes that whilst the book was "written by a "friend" of the club (at the time) ... he was not privy to most of the club business ...". The reviewer also observes that this club was a considerably different entity by the time the book was published, 'so his analysis is very dated' ('Rob, BC, Canada,' 2000). I will, however, make reference to it throughout my thesis, as and when appropriate.

A particularly influential anthropologist for me is Anthony P. Cohen, who has greatly contributed to modern anthropological thinking about how communities are symbolically constructed. Cohen's (1985) *The Symbolic Construction of Community* is a very important yet unpretentious work, and is particularly pertinent to my research, as he explains just how sub-cultures like outlaw bikers symbolically construct the boundaries that symbolically separate themselves from others in their wider community, and how they use these boundaries to give substance to their values and social identities. I also reviewed Cohen's (1986) *Symbolising Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures* and his (1987)

*Whalsay: Symbol, Segment and Boundary in a Shetland Island Community* to assist me to establish how the construction of boundaries through symbols is related to the notion of embodiment, and how social identity is relational to ‘others’ in that society. I found Boon’s (1982) *Other Tribes, Other Scribes* useful, when read in conjunction with Cohen, with particular reference to opposition and boundary and ‘the significant other’ (Boon 1982: 6, 26, Cohen 1985: 115 – 118). There have been two significant papers written about outlaw motorcycle clubs in Northern Ireland (Ballard 1997 and Moore 2003), that I found very useful, as I felt that both had some relevance to what I was learning about the evolution of outlaw clubs in the South Island of New Zealand. Moore (2003) makes a particularly pertinent observation, when he argues:

... the heavily ritualised nature of outlaw biking can be explained, therefore, as an attempt by MC clubs to mark boundaries within a constructed symbolic community, but these boundaries are always relational, placing the biker community in relation to what they would term as ‘straight’ society. All this complex matrix of construction is represented for outlaw bikers by the wearing of the club patch which openly declares a kind of subcultural ethnicity and which, therefore, can never be allowed to be challenged by another club, ‘taken down’ or (the most heinous crime) misplaced or lost (Moore 2003:11, 3).

Moore also makes reference to Bell’s (1990) *Acts of Union: Youth, Culture and Sectarianism in Northern Ireland* when he cites Philip Cohen’s forward where he, Cohen, asserts, “... the work is about a whole section of youth whose culture and conditions of existence have to too long been travestied or ignored simply because they are growing up in Northern Ireland rather than mainland Britain” (Bell 1990: ix, Moore: 2003, 3). I will argue in Chapters five and six, the similarity between the evolution of youth cultures in Northern Ireland and New Zealand, given the economic relationship and the strong emotional and cultural bonds that New Zealand had as a loyal member of the British Commonwealth of Nations in the 1960s and 70s.

I also made considerable use of Richard Jenkins’s (1996) *Social Identity* to assist me to argue that outlaw biker social identity must be seen as both individual and collective. Jenkins work addresses a number of the key components that I have set out to argue in this thesis – social groups and social categories, embodiment, difference and community, and

categorisation and resistance. I will discuss embodiment at some length, and will use Bowie's (2000) survey of anthropological work on embodiment (Chapters 2 and 3 in *The Anthropology of Religion*) as my main source. I will reference the works of Turner, Ortner and Langer (cited in Lambek's 2002) *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*), to analyse the nature of the symbols that I identity, and how these symbols actually work.

I will discuss one key symbol, the 'outlaw' motorcycle, at some length, with particular reference to identity and embodiment, and will link this embodiment to 'risk' to argue that risk too is a symbolic 'meaning-making' outlaw biker activity. In this respect, I will refer to material on risk from an anthropological perspective, particularly the works of Deborah Lupton, including her *Risk* (1999), and her *Risk and Sociocultural Theory: new directions and perspectives* (1999a). I will argue that risk is an essential component in an 'outlaw' biker's life, and the powerful 'outlaw' motorcycle is an ideal vehicle for such risk taking.

I attempt to interpret the outlaw biker subculture, with particular reference to the concept of making meaning, or 'meaning-making,' as Geertz puts it (Geertz's 1973:12 -13, 23, 155-6). As Macey (2000: 155) notes, "the goal of the anthropologist is not to establish pseudo-scientific laws, but to gain access to a conceptual world that initially appears opaquely foreign" (Macey 2000: 155). Geertz's (1973) broadly semiotic approach to his object of study takes anthropology to be an interpretive science that is in search of meaning. Geertz borrows from Ryle by referring to anthropology as an elaborate exercise in 'thick description' that seeks to analyse the interwoven systems of signs that make up any culture, arguing that 'man is ultimately a symbolizing, conceptualising and meaning-seeking animal' (Macey 2000: 155-6).

I also make use of the notion of 'moral panic,' drawing particularly Stanley Cohen's (2002) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Kenneth Thompson's (1998) *Moral Panics*, and journal articles that have appeared in the new SAGE journals *Crime Media Culture: An International Journal* (Issue 1, April 2005). Moral panics are essentially episodes of widespread anxiety and fear triggered by apparently trivial events (Abercrombe *et al* 2000:

231). They usually involve the identification of a 'folk devil' that is held responsible for the moral or social damage has allegedly occurred. Abercrombie *et al* (2000) argue that, in contemporary societies, the mass media may play a very large role in moral panics, and that 'moral entrepreneurs' may lead a moral crusade to rectify the perceived evil (Abercrombie *et al* 2000: 231). I will argue that individual police officers, and latterly the *New Zealand Police Association*, have taken the role of 'moral entrepreneurs.' I also found Hall and Jefferson's (1993) *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in post-war Britain* a very useful resource, particularly the discussion on 'moral panics' and 'style, in the works of Critcher, Hebdige, Jefferson and Willis contained therein.

Others have also conducted fieldwork with marginalised populations. There is also a diverse range of other material, ranging from the more theoretical, such as Bourdieu's (1985) 'The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups,' to Acheson's (1988) *The Lobster Gangs of Maine*, where he researched the culture and economics of the close knit, hardy lobster fishermen who fish along the coastline of Maine. I found myself reading journal articles about Canadian Skinhead culture one day, and the anthropological perspectives of labour migration in South Africa the next. I found that as I read more widely, I started to appreciate just how complex the anthropological study of subcultures and marginalised communities could be. I also found myself reading a number of non-academic, albeit important readings about marginalised groups, including John Steinbeck's (1988) *The Harvest Gypsies: On the Road to the Grapes of Wrath*, which is a collection of seven articles that Steinbeck wrote in 1936 about the plight of impoverished migrant farm workers during the 'Dust Bowl' migration.<sup>2</sup>

**In sum**, I will attempt to take a coherent, logical, integrated theoretical approach to my thesis by progressively addressing the symbolic construction of the outlaw biker's community, their boundary making, embodiment, symbols, meaning making, and risk taking, and then talk about globalisation and the media. In particular, I will attempt to identify what is or may have been influenced by globalisation and the media, and what has



naturally evolved because it is a logical cultural response from such marginalised communities.

## Chapter Three

### Post-War Youth Culture, the Visual and Print Media, and the Evolution of an International ‘Outlaw’ Motorcycle Subculture

“Get your motor runnin’  
Head out on the highway  
Lookin’ for adventure  
And whatever comes our way ...”

*Born to be Wild*  
*Steppenwolf*

From the *Easy Rider* movie soundtrack album (1969)

#### 1. Culture and the Media – An Introduction

Hall and Jefferson (1993) argue that youth culture has been widely written about, but few people have understood its significance as one of the striking and visible manifestations of social and political change in post-war Europe and North America (Hall and Jefferson 1993: Flyleaf). In what follows, I examine the role of the international media in the development of OMCs as one example of youth culture that spanned the North Atlantic and which was thus of a global or ‘cosmopolitan’ nature. This term ‘cosmopolitanism’, refers to “... being of or from or knowing many parts of the world” (Concise Oxford Dictionary 1990: 260). Barker (1999) argued that cosmopolitanism is fast becoming an aspect of day-to-day life in western societies, which is the reason why ‘identity’ emerged as the central theme of cultural studies in the 1990s (Barker 1999: 1–3). He argues that there is a mounting critique or deconstruction of the western notion of whole persons who possess a stable identity, and observes, that in contrast, conceptions of identity within cultural studies have begun to stress the decentred subject, the self as made up of multiple and changeable identities. Barker argues that globalisation of the institutions of television raise crucial questions about culture and cultural identities, and that the globalisation of television has provided a proliferating resource for both the deconstruction and reconstruction of cultural identities. Whilst accepting that television is not the only source of global cultural capital,

he does argue that currently it is the major one (although the Internet must now be fast replacing television as a primary cultural resource).

I will argue that the 'outlaw' biker identity is as much a creation of globalisation and the mass media as it is a subcultural construction. The outlaw biker subculture would arguably be a dead as disco, along with many other 'fad' subcultures, if it were not for the participants unwavering commitment to their 'outlaw' brotherhood ethos, their attractive deviant 'outlaw' image, and a few lucky breaks with a number of highly visible media representations in the international mass media over the years.

According to Stanley Cohen (2002) the media are key players in the creation of the image of the deviant 'Folk Devil' (Cohen 2002: 7). He argues that, "a critical dimension for understanding the reaction to deviance both by the public as a whole and by agents of social control, is the nature of the information that is received about the behaviour in question" (Cohen 2002: 7). It is now generally accepted that the genesis of OMC culture was the 'Hollister incident', and the public reaction to the infamous July 1947 *Life* magazine photograph of the beer-guzzling, deviant 'Hollister' biker who was photographed defiantly slouched on his motorcycle amidst a sea of broken beer bottles (Harris 1985: 16-19, Veno 2003: 27-28, Reynolds 2000: 54).<sup>1</sup> This *Life* magazine photograph (**Plate 3**) remains a seminal 'outlaw' biker image, despite the recent discovery of another photographic image in the San Francisco Chronicle's archives (**Plate 5**), that indicates this iconic photograph may have been staged for the camera (Yates, 1999: 78-9, Reynolds, 2000: 50-1, 56-7). Some of those involved in the 'riot' at Hollister went on to become founding members of the San Bernardino ('Berdoo'), California chapter of the *Hell's Angels M.C.* (Barger 2000: 30-1).<sup>2</sup> Whilst the *Hell's Angels M.C.* were not the first 'outlaw' motorcycle club, the 'Berdoo' *Hell's Angels* are considered today to be the founding fathers of the modern-day OMCs.<sup>3</sup> This relatively minor (but highly publicised) incident, and subsequent incidents involving bikers that occurred at Porterville and Riverside, California were publicised in a short story titled *The Cyclists' Raid*, that was

written by Frank Rooney and published in *Harper's Magazine* in January 1951 (Harris 1985: 23). This article is considered to have been the inspiration for Stanley Kramer's famous 1953 biker film, *The Wild One*, starring Marlon Brando and Lee Marvin. This was the first feature film to examine outlaw biker violence in America.

Veno (2002: 31) argues that the aftermath of war was the catalyst for the formation and growth of OMCs in the USA. Many of those who gathered at Hollister were somewhat disenfranchised, disaffected young men who were struggling to settle into a routine, post-war life in California at the end of the Second World War. Hunter Thompson (1966) rather cynically asserts that the founder members of the California *Hell's Angels* were over-represented by people bearing the 'Linkhorn' gene (a reference to American novelist Nelson Algren's Fitz and Dove Linkhorn characters – impoverished, dispossessed 'Okies, Arkies and hillbillies' who had been forced to migrate from the Midwest's dust-bowl communities from the mid 1930s to seek employment as blue-collar workers in Northern California (1966: 160-65). Thompson (1966) observed (referring to them as 'white trash'):

... Once here (sic), the newcomers hung on for a few years, breeding prolifically – until the war started. Then they either joined up or had their pick of jobs on a booming labour market. Either way, they were Californians when the war ended. The old way of life was scattered along route 66, and their children grew up in a new world. The Linkhorns had finally found a home ... (Thompson 1966: 162).

Even today, internationally, a disproportionate number of outlaw bikers come from blue-collar families, and continue to strongly identify with blue-collar mores, values and issues. I will discuss this migration aspect further in my discussions about New Zealand outlaw bikers, with particular reference to the migrant's search for meaning and identity.

Motorcycles were also becoming central to youth culture in post-war Great Britain. The early 1950s saw the emergence of the 'Teddy Boy movement' that emerged out of the East End of London (Osgerby 2004: 72). Whilst the mainstream 'Ted' had a preference for long drape jackets, stovepipe trousers, bright ankle socks, 'Brothel Creeper' shoes, and 'slim-Jim' ties, the American inspired Rock n' Roll that was taking Britain by storm at the time also attracted the fore-runners of the 'Rockers,' 'Greasers' or 'Ton-Up Boys' who

took to wearing American ‘bad-boy’ black leather jackets, T-shirts, jeans and motorcycle boots (Farren 1985).. The late 50s also saw the emergence of a variation of customised motorcycles in the United Kingdom that would become known as ‘Café Racers’ (Stuart, 1987, Walker 1994; Clay 1998). ‘Café Racers’ were essentially powerful, sleek, stripped-down high-performance motorcycles more aligned to racing motorcycles than recreational models. They were fitted with short, low handlebars, often equipped with body-hugging racing cowlings to enhance their performance. The riders of these British and continental motorcycles took to congregating at transport cafes along the North Circular Road near London. Images of these motorcyclists from the period record the emergence of decorated ‘Rocker’ jackets that often bore hand painted brands or personal logos. For a period in the 1960s, some English bikers adopted a hybrid style, including the wearing of highly decorated military-style ‘Flat-Hats’ adorned with metal swastikas and the like, together with the aforementioned ‘rocker’ jackets (Wilde, 1977, Farren 1985: 54-55, Osgerby 2004: 73). These jackets often bore names and slogans picked out with metal studs. These images viewed today would probably be described as distinctly ‘high-camp.’

Negative images of adherents of the British ‘Rocker’ sub-culture were often portrayed in the media during the 1960s as persons engaged in deviant behaviour. The published photographs that appeared in the international media that supposedly recorded violent running ‘battles’ between the immaculately dressed, fashion conscious ‘mods’ and the darker leather clad ‘biker’ orientated ‘rockers’ that occurred in the “*sleepy seaside towns*” of Margate, Brighton, Clacton, Southend and Hastings in the South-east of England over the Easter Weekend in 1964 are a classic example of how the media chose to portray youth culture at the time (Cohen 2002:135 – 9, Osgerby 2004: 73, Stummer, 2004: 3). *The Independent on Sunday* newspaper revisited these images on 4 April 2004 with the headline ‘Forty years ago these pictures shocked polite society. But were they staged by the press?’ (Plate 6). The *Independent’s* reporter, Robin Stummer observed:

They came, they saw, they beat each other senseless on the shingle. Or did they? Forty years ago this Easter weekend, mods took on rockers

for the first time, fuelling Britain's first mass-media scare over dissolute, drug-taking, mindlessly violent youth (Stummer 2004: 3).

Stummer's article contains admissions from several people who claimed to have been present at the various locations and who now concede that some of the photographs were staged. David Cooke, a Brighton-based mod ephemera dealer, and "An authority on the history and lore of the mod world" is quoted in this article as saying, "...there are famous photographs taken in Brighton where the photographer paid the lads a few shillings ... quite a few people know these photographs were set up in Brighton." Howard Baker, now a published author, but in 1964 "a purist mod," argues, "...in Margate some photographs were definitely staged ... reporters and photographers were paying off a lot of kids. You'd get a fiver or a tenner. We'd get pissed on it." (Stummer 2004: 3)

(a) **The Visual Media**

Whilst there have been many seminal 'outlaw' biker images carried in the mass media over the years, arguably it was Stanley Kramer's film *The Wild One* (1954) that first represented the biker sub-culture internationally to a voracious youth culture that was crying out for and therefore receptive to such rebellious imagery. The social message carried in that movie struck a cord with youth the world over, largely because of the attractive 'deviant' Brando character that instantly become representative of all rebellious youth, via the mass media. This representation of a deviant biker transformed Brando's character and therefore all 'outlaw' bikers into highly mobile, dangerous, ticking youth time bombs. This representation of anarchic, rebellious youth was reinforced two years later in 1955 by James Dean's performance in the film, *Rebel Without a Cause*. Brando and Dean became instant youth icons. Fast cars and motorcycles were *de rigueur* for any real (and celluloid youthful) 'outlaws', who intended to espouse the 'live fast, die young' approach to life.

These two films (and the untimely death of the youthful James Dean) ensured that the sports car and the 'outlaw' motorcycle would become metaphors for youthful rebellion. Interestingly, Brando and his 'Black Rebels Motorcycle Club' members in *The Wild One* rode British motorcycles, whilst Marvin and his 'The Beetles' (sic) 'motorcycle gang'

members largely rode American *Harley-Davidson* motorcycles.<sup>4</sup> Maz Harris (1985)

argues:

Like *Easy Rider*, a generation later, *The Wild One* created the image of the motorcyclist that haunted the minds and the writings of scriptwriters for years to come. Brando did for biking what Presley had done for rock 'n' roll, and there was no turning back. What did it matter if the image didn't exactly tally with reality. Who cared whether the ragged, swaggering, drunk Chino, played by Lee Marvin, leader of a rival bike gang, portrayed a far more accurate picture of the kind of individual responsible for the 'invasions' of Hollister, Porterville (sic) or Riverside? It was Brando, the mean, moody, magnificent rebel who became the stereotype upon which the universalised mass motorcycle subculture of the late 1950s and 1960s was founded (Harris 1985: 21).

Harris later argued that it was "via a process of action and reaction" that the motorcycle subculture evolved, in less than a decade, from a few relatively small groups of restless ex-American GI motorcycle riders into a mass subculture spreading far beyond the confines of California across the whole of North America and into Europe and Australasia (Harris 1985: 24). He does not contend that this entire sub cultural explosion can be traced solely to the release of *The Wild One*, but does argue that the film projected the image that brought together many separate strands of development in the motorcycle subculture (Harris 1985: 21-5).

*Life* magazine, in its July 1972 twenty-fifth anniversary issue, observed:

*The Wild One* became a milestone in movie history, launching the cult of gang violence in films. It also helped create an image of motorcycling that non-violent bike riders have been trying to live down for a quarter of a century now. (Harris 1985: 23).

Prassel (1993) observes:

'The Wild One' stirred huge controversy and attracted huge audiences. Supposedly based on incidents at Hollister and Riverside, California in 1947 and 1948, it became a favourite of the world's youth. Young men adopted Brando's leather jacket and organised their own motorcycle gangs. British censors banned the film for twelve years (Prassel 1993: 294).

Thompson (1966) quotes Preetam Bobo, a legendary *Hell's Angel* who, according to Thompson, was only one of only two lifetime members of the Angel's San Francisco ('Frisco') chapter at the time (Thompson 1966: 68-71). Thompson interviewed Bobo about

his early days with an earlier group of loose-knit San Francisco bikers, *The Market Street Commandos*. He quotes Bobo as saying that the *Market Street Commandos* drifted on, without much action, for about a year.

Then, in early 1954, *The Wild One* came to town, and things changed. “We went up to the Fox Theatre on Market Street,” said Preetam. “There were about fifty of us, with jugs of wine and our black leather jackets ... we sat up there in the balcony and smoked cigars and drank wine and cheered like bastards. We could all see ourselves right there on the screen. We were all Marlon Brando. I guess I must have seen it four or five times (Thompson 1966: 68).

*The Wild One* never really had the same impact in New Zealand and the United Kingdom as it did in North America, largely because it was banned from public display for lengthy periods, so when it was finally shown, it was more a dated curiosity piece, and not very influential or shocking to a public who had moved on.

*The Wild One* precipitated a spate of what is now often referred to as ‘biker ‘B movies.’ The first wave of these films ranged from *Motorcycle Gang* (1957) to *Road of Death* (1974), although there were several *ad hoc* attempts to revisit the genre in the 80s and 90s (Wooley and Price 2005: 8, 158) <sup>5</sup>. There were a number of crossover movies of the period that used motorcycles as central props and metaphors. These include the blockbuster, WW II prisoner of war film, *The Great Escape*, starring Steve McQueen (1963), *La Motorcyclette*, aka *Naked under Leather*, aka *Girl on a Motorcycle*, an Anglo-French film starring Marianne Faithful (1968), and of course, the ultimate ‘road movie,’ *Easy Rider* (1969). What is perhaps more interesting is that in relatively recent times there has been a proliferation of well researched books that have attempted to analyse biker literature, biker ‘B’ films, and other popular culture aspects of the ‘outlaw’ biker subculture from the period. <sup>6</sup>

In 1969/70 there was even a popular television series about a surly biker – Michael Parks playing a sullen ‘Jim Bronson’ in NBC’s *Then Came Bronson*, “riding along that long, lonesome highway [as the show’s theme song put it] every week, at least for awhile” (Wooley and Price, 2005: viii). Perhaps a coming of age event for the Australasian



‘outlaw’ bikers was the appearance of home grown biker publications, and biker movies. A landmark event was arguably the release of the popular Australian ‘outlaw’ biker movie *Stone* (1974), which was a hit with outlaw bikers, despite the fact that the bikers (*The Grave Diggers*) in the movie rode 900cc Kawasaki motorcycles (Osgerby 2005: 125; Veno 2003: 139–40). The film went on to become an Australasian cult classic, and has recently been re-released on DVD. It was certified as R 18 when it was released in New Zealand (Osgerby 2005: 125; Veno 2003: 139–40).

Whilst *Easyrider* was a low budget production, it was to become a hugely influential, film, and remains perhaps one of the most recognisable ‘biker’ films of all time (despite the fact it was essentially a film about drug dealing hippies!) Peter Biskind (1998), in his behind-the-scenes account of Hollywood at work and play, observes:

In 1969, a low-budget biker movie, *Easy Rider*, shocked Hollywood with its stunning success. An unabashed celebration of sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll (on screen and off), *Easy Rider* heralded a heady decade in which a rebellious wave of talented young filmmakers invigorated the movie industry (Biskind 1998: Flyleaf).

I will not attempt yet another in-depth analysis of *Easy Rider*, as the film has been subjected to excessive analysis in every film anthology and road movie book since its release. Suffice it to say, *Easy Rider* proved to be a significant vehicle for outlaw bikers. If nothing else, it was a metaphor for (‘outlaw’) biker freedom, the freedom of the open road, and of course, the elevation of Peter Fonda’s character’s customised ‘Captain America’ chopper motorcycle, and to a lesser extent, Dennis Hopper’s less extreme ‘Bobber’ style ‘Billy bike’ (**Plate 7**) to icon status (Harris 1985: 21, 119–20, 123–4).

Almost to a man, the ‘outlaw’ bikers who I discussed this movie with saw *Easy Rider* as the film that defined the ‘outlaw’ motorcycle, rather than it having any real bearing on their chosen ‘outlaw’ biker lifestyle.

(b) **The Print Media**

There was a proliferation of ‘pulp’ biker novels from around 1960, with several writers producing formula biker novels for the youth market. Early examples were Pat Stadly’s

*Black Leather Barbarians*, published in the United States by *New American Library* in 1960, and Gillian Freeman's *The Leather Boys*, published in the United Kingdom under the pseudonym Eliot George by *Anthony Blond Limited* in 1961. These and other biker books would ultimately be re-published by *New English Library* from around 1969 until the mid to late 1970s (Osgerby 2005: 74–7).<sup>7</sup>

Whilst most of these biker books were published (or republished) in the United Kingdom (by *New English Library*) during this influential period, new biker novels continued to be published in North America at the same time (Osgerby 2005: 74–7). An example is Jack Thomas' *The Bikers* (1972). The 'outlaw' biker culture also increasingly featured in the plots in crime novels written for the more general fiction market in North America and the United Kingdom throughout the 1960s and 70s.<sup>8</sup>

Non-fiction specifically relating to outlaw bikers started to appear on the shelves in the mid 1960s (Thompson 1966, Lyon 1968). One of the early examples was George Henry Smith's (1966) book (published under the pseudonym of Jan Hudson), *The Sex and Savagery of Hell's Angels: The Full Story of America's Motorcycle 'Wild Ones*, that was originally published in the United States. The book deals with the Californian *Hell's Angels M.C.* Osgerby (2005) argues that Smith/Hudson "... probably culled most of his information from press clippings." *New English Library* first published *Sex and Savagery* in the United Kingdom in September 1967 (Osgerby 2005: 74). Many of my participants report that they read this book in the late 1960s, or the early 70s, and most remembered the content. *Sex and Savagery* was published in the United States the same year as Thompson's *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga*, and dealt with some of the same participants and the same incidents as Thompson's book did, albeit in a more colourful style, and perhaps more from a biker's perspective. Hudson followed this up with *Bikers At War*, published in the United States and in the United Kingdom in 1976. A (non-fiction) book that some of my participants also report that they read was Jamie Mandelkau's (1971) *Buttons: The Making of a President*, a factual account of the author's association with the

UK *Hell's Angels* during the late 60s/early 70s. Another book that a number of my participants had read was the (1968) *Freewheelin' Frank: Secretary of the Angels*, a factual account of the life of Frank Reynolds, who had been a member of the San Francisco *Hell's Angels M.C.* since 1961 (the same year that the New Zealand *Hell's Angels M.C.* received their charter). This book deals with club life, and makes some attempt to explain the rituals and symbolism surrounding 'outlaw' biker clubs (particularly, the Californian *Hell's Angels M.C.*)

In 1971, *New English Library* published a glossy, full-colour *Hell's Angel* magazine, boasting they were 'The First Pictorial Guide to the Motorcycle Outlaws of the Seventies' (Osgerby 2005: 76). These two special edition photographic collections were subsequently consolidated into a major *New English Library* pictorial publication, Sam Wilde's (1977) *Barbarians on Wheels*.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting that the 'deviant' biker image that appears on the cover of Peter Cave's *Chopper* (1971), appears in the photographic plates in Sam Wilde's *Barbarians on Wheels* (1977), and on the cover of the reprint of Mick's Norman's notorious *Angel Chronicles* (four books), that were republished in 2002 as a single compendium edition, which indicates an ongoing interest in this type of literature, regardless of how dated they now appear to some.

*New English Library* obviously owned these images, and therefore saw it expedient to use their own images for their book covers, but it is interesting to note that this particular biker was considered deviant enough for both staff writers to select his image from many others for the covers of their books. His German steel helmet, chains, and the swastika tattoo on his cheek obviously portrayed the level of deviance they were attempting to capture as their marketing initiative for their anticipated customer base (**plate 8**). Images from this photographic collection had also appeared on some of the other *New English Library* biker pulp fiction, including Mick Norman's *Guardian Angel* (1974), etcetera. Another widely read lurid tale of the period was Kurt Saxton's *Wheels of Rage*, published in the United States in 1972, and in the United Kingdom by *New English Library* in 1974.<sup>10</sup> Whilst

*Wheels of Rage* (allegedly an account of the author's association with the Californian *Iron Cross M.C.*), is today routinely advertised as fiction by the sellers of used books, as *New English Library* chose to publish it in the same format as its lurid biker pulp fiction novels.

The English *Hell's Angel*, Ian 'Maz' Harris was asked to write an introduction to *Redemption's* (1995) reprint of Peter Cave's cult classic, *Chopper* (1971). He comments that he was initially cautious - "... why anyone would want to publish, let alone purchase, these tales of bad boy bikers, a quarter of a century on, was a mystery to me." Harris however went on to write in his forward:

... Rummaging through the attic, I found what I was looking for ... a complete collection of biker fiction bearing the *New English Library* logo ... and found myself stepping back in time, to the days when I knew nothing about bikers, but desired, desperately, to learn.

*Chopper* first appeared in 1971, *Mama*, twelve months later. Both were best sellers. The characters are far-fetched, and their exploits were exaggerated beyond belief, but they struck a strong cord with disaffected youth. As Harris (1995) observed, "... if we couldn't break through the barrier, between us and our aspirations, well, we'd read about others who had, even it was mostly a myth" (Cave 1995: Forward). Harris observes that the history of the *Hells Angels* owes nothing to "flights of fancy" like *Chopper* and *Mama*, but does concede that, "... *Chopper* and *Mama* are part of our past only insofar as they were instrumental in shaping the public's perception of us, the *Hells Angels*" (Cave 1995: Forward).

Seminal biker imagery from the research period (1950 – 1975) includes the highly colourful artwork of the American graphic artist (and lifelong biker), David Mann (Osgerby 2005: 81). Mann's biker renderings were published in *Easy Rider* magazine from 1971, following some earlier art work Mann did for the legendary custom car creator, Ed 'Big Daddy' Roth, who started the first American *Chopper* magazine in 1967 (Osgerby 2005: 80-1, 93). Mann's paintings set 'outlaw' Harley chopper motorcycles against surreal backgrounds, and distorted skylines, colourful images that celebrated the chopper motorcycle and the freedom of the open road (Osgerby 2005: 81). Many of his images

captured the 'Easyrider' ethos – speed, the open road, long flowing hair – freedom. I can recall (and my participants confirm) that David Mann posters were often found displayed on 'outlaw' clubhouse walls in New Zealand during the 70s and 80s, and are often found in biker's bedrooms today. These images are still cherished today by life-long bikers, not just 'outlaw' bikers. Mann, who died in September, 2004 had a custom built motorcycle dedicated to his memory in a recent episode of the *Discovery Channel's* custom motorcycle fabrication 'reality' series, *American Chopper*.

A number of churchmen (and later, a few ex 'outlaw' bikers who became Christians) wrote books in the 70s and 80s about their ministering to bikers (and in the case of ex bikers, vivid accounts of their earlier gang lives). The descriptions of their earlier 'deviance' were often graphically outlined to reinforce the subsequent redemption of the author. An early example of a book about ministry to outlaw bikers is David Collyer's *Double Zero: Five Years with Rockers and Hell's Angels in an English City* (1973). These books invariably reference 'The Hell's Angels,' where they can, as an apparent benchmark for deviance (Greenaway, 1982; Flyleaf, footnote 6, chapter 4). Obviously, the redemption of a 'Hell's Angel' is a considerably greater challenge than of an outlaw from another, less 'deviant' club!

Whilst I would argue that most biker-orientated articles that were read and absorbed by those embedded in the hard-core biker scene were sagely weighed against their own experiences, and much of it taken with a grain of salt, many 'outsiders' took what they read as gospel truth. The generalisations, distortions of truth, outright fabrications, and misrepresentations promulgated in the mass media from 1950 – 1975 continue to dog the outlaw biker subculture today. This is evident in law enforcement publications that perpetuate myths without question, uncritically referencing earlier dubious material. Certainly, papers written by law enforcements officers in the 70s and 80s continued to emphasise practices that had long disappeared from 'outlaw' biker symbols and rituals (if they ever existed at all). Two very good examples of the promulgation of shallow, dated,

subjective and sometimes outright spurious material (material that still influences law enforcement officers to this day) are the superficial American publications, *Inside Look At Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs* (1992), and Rolfe and Greeson's *Gangs USA* (1992), both published by *Paladin Press*. I have personally seen these two publications in the often-limited libraries of law enforcement officers in North America, the United Kingdom and Australasia. They were invariably catalogued with other official police manuals and related reference material, which indicated to me that the information gleaned from such publications might well influence some law enforcement officers' thinking about the contemporary 'outlaw' biker subculture.

Regional biker publications started to emerge in the late 60s/early to mid 70s. An early example is the (1971) Australian biker pulp fiction biker novel, *The Bikies* by Ricki Francis. In fact, 'the second longest running 'outlaw biker' magazine in the world (after the longstanding American motorcycle culture magazine, *Easyriders* is *OZBIKE*, which is currently published in Australia by *UCP Publishing Pty Ltd*, Gladesville, NSW. *OZBIKE* was first published in 1978, whilst *Easyriders* first appeared in 1971 (Osgerby, 2005: 93; personal communication with 'Skol,' publisher of *OZBIKE*, 16 May 2006). *OZBIKE* regularly features photographs and articles relating to 'outlaw' clubs in Australia and New Zealand. In 1989, the widely read motorcycle magazine, *Live to Ride*, was launched in Australia to cater to the more hardcore Australasian bikers market, which was followed by a New Zealand motorcycle magazine, *Twin Eagle* that first appeared in the early 1990s.

As Osgerby (2005) observes, audio-visual media, print and other communications play major parts in modern human existence, "mediating diverse interactions between people ... moreover, they are numerous, heterogenous and multi-faceted" (Osgerby 2005: x). The post World War II period saw momentous changes, as the increasingly global media transported representations of youth culture and identity in relatively real time. Anthropologists have become increasingly interested in the dynamic and ever-changing development of contemporary youth culture and its relationship with the media, which

continually reacts to economic and popular forces, as the various technologies rapidly evolve, by examining 'youth media' in its economic, cultural; and political contexts (Osgerby 2005: x, 6, 46). Media, sub-culture and lifestyle are now so inextricably linked to market forces that they continue to feed the insatiable global phenomenon that is youth culture. The OMC sub-culture is simply an enduring early example of globalisation and the media, albeit it an important one, in that it has survived and flourished as others have fallen by the wayside.

## Chapter Four

### *Hell's Angels, 'Outlaws' and the 'Outlaw' motorcycle*

“If there's one that I like  
It's a burn up on my bike  
A burn up with a bird up on my bike  
Now the M1 ain't much fun  
Till you try and do a ton  
A burn up on my bike, that's what I like”.

(Song) *Just For Kicks*  
Mike Sarne  
*Parlophone R 4974*  
(1963)

#### 1. **The Hell's Angels M.C.**

I set out in this chapter to address ‘outlaws’ in general, and OMCs (‘outlaw bikies’, in the New Zealand vernacular), as opposed to ‘bikers’, with particular reference to the role that the *Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club* played in the construction of the generic South Island New Zealand OMC identity. I also intend to discuss the importance of the motorcycle, with particular reference to the customised ‘outlaw’ motorcycle, which has become a sub-cultural metaphor for freedom and the open road.

Arguably, the one writer more than any other who was responsible for introducing the ‘outlaw’ biker sub-culture into the collective consciousness was journalist and best-selling author Hunter Stockton Thompson (1937 – 2005). Thompson’s seminal book, *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga*, latterly shortened to *Hell's Angels*, propelled the *Hell's Angels M.C.* (and therefore all ‘outlaw’ bikers), onto the world stage in 1966, where they have remained ever since as the foremost international ‘outlaw’ motorcycle club.<sup>1</sup> The international profile of the *Hell's Angels M.C.* was considerably enhanced in the 60s by their inclusion in the more literary works of such influential and talented American writers of their day as Thompson, the poet/playwright Michael McClure, and the novelist Tom Wolfe, and their association with music world celebrities, such as Gerry Garcia from *The Grateful Dead* (Thompson 1966, Reynold and McClure 1968, Wolfe 1968). This list is not exhaustive, because as the Angel’s notoriety has grown, so has their circle of



celebrity ‘friends’ and fellow travellers. Their propensity to form strategic relationships with mainstream celebrities was noted by Hopper and Moore (1983) who observed:

... Much of the Angel’s notoriety has come about because they have on occasions consorted with popular authors (Thompson 1967; Wolfe 1968) and famous rock groups (Eisen, 1970). Other outlaw groups accuse the Angels of having courted fame rather than having it thrust upon them (Hopper and Moore 1983: 59).

Thompson, McClure and Wolfe had considerable credibility with their reading public as being writers that were attuned to the times. These writers were instrumental in exposing the ‘outlaw’ motorcycle sub-culture to a far broader reading population than did the bulk of the other biker material that was produced during the 60s and 70s. This exposure arguably helped to greatly enhance their deviant profile in the public consciousness, thus making them a more legitimate sub-culture for academics to research, analyse and write about.

But, as Stern and Stern (1990) observed:

... The Angels held great appeal, but their lifestyle was available only to an exclusive few. They were a private club, not a political party or social movement. Even outsiders who got very close to them, such as Hunter Thompson and Ken Kesey, were never fully trusted by the Angel hard core. Angels were a band apart, and they really were outlaws; their exclusivity was part of their appeal ... (Stern and Stern 1990: 185).

By the mid 1960s, the wily visionary Californian *Hell’s Angel*, Ralph ‘Sonny’ Barger had almost single-handedly moulded the remnants of the old San Bernardino or ‘Berdoos’ chapter into what would become the Angels power base and their acknowledged parent chapter – The Oakland, California chapter of the *Hell’s Angels M.C.*<sup>2</sup> In March 1965, the Attorney-General of California, Thomas C. Lynch, released a short, superficial, and colourful report, that would become known simply as ‘The Lynch Report.’ This short 15 page report, “based on a survey of old police files” chronicled eighteen outlaw biker ‘outrages’, propelled the Californian *Hell’s Angels M.C.* into the limelight, when the report was picked up by the national media (Thompson 1966: 33, ‘The Lynch Report’ 1965). In November 1965, the widely read national US publication, *The Saturday Evening Post* (**Plate 9**) featured an atypical Californian *Hell’s Angel* on the front cover of their November 20 issue (Thompson 1966: 51-2, 63-4, Osgerby 2005: 47). The accompanying

article, 'Hell's Angels: A searching report on what's behind the strange cult of motorcycle gangs' firmly established the *Hell's Angels* in the American consciousness. This major article, along with Thompson's early investigative pieces on the *Hell's Angels M.C.* that he wrote for *The Nation*, and his subsequent best selling book, immediately enhanced the Angels collective identity in the public consciousness. Interestingly, *Penguin Publishers* chose to feature the famous 1965 *The Saturday Evening Post* photograph of the atypical Californian *Hell's Angel*, Skip Von Bugening, for the cover of their first paperback edition (1967) of *Hell's Angels* in the UK (Thompson 1966: 63-4).

Stern and Stern (1990) argued that 'sixties people' (meaning hippies and their academic liberal fellow-travellers) saw the *Hell's Angels* as 'a delicious concept' (Stern and Stern 1990: 184). It was their ability to generate outrage that made them so attractive.

... Motorcycle outlaws – now there was a delicious concept! Take a large portion of freewheeling libido, a dash of old-fashioned cowboy wanderlust, and a measure of 'On the Road' alienation; add the thrill of danger, the throb of unmuffled pistons, and the gleam of chrome; season with illegal drugs, then garnish with hobnail boots, black leather jackets, and bicep-revealing sleeveless denim vests. Serve it forth in California – the Bay Area in particular – and you have a dish that the thrill hungry sixties were destined to feast upon ... (Stern and Stern 1990: 184).

The Angels were angry rebels with no cause other than rebellion itself. They were a band apart, and they were outlaws; their exclusivity was part of their appeal. Stern and Stern argue that it is important to realise that in the mid sixties, as much as the *Hell's Angels* were romanticized by those who wanted to see them as the 'Last Free Men,' their repulsiveness was always very much part of the picture (Stern and Stern 1990: 185) "That was what gave them their fiendish glamour. To be repulsive in an age of overwhelming cuteness had terrific sex appeal ..." (Stern and Stern 1990: 185-6). As earlier, Ed Roth claimed the Angels were "...the Wild Bill Hickoks, the Billy the Kids – they're the last American heroes we have, man" (Thompson 1966: 238). The then president of the Ventura Chapter of the *Hell's Angels M.C.*, George Christie picked up on the theme in the (1996) *History Channel* 'In Search of History' documentary about the *Hell's Angels*, when he argued that the romanticism of the *Hell's Angels* relates to the desire of "... nonbikers,

Hippie or otherwise, to recreate such nonconforming western outlaws as Jessie James, Billy the Kid and Doc Holiday” (Wood 2003: 336).

The short-lived relationship between Hippies and the Californian *Hell's Angels* was beneficial to both groups – the Hippies believed they had forged an alliance with a scruffy Praetorian Guard of fellow travellers. Stern and Stern (1990) argue, “Hippie logic reasoned that the Angels – like hippies, wanted only to do their own thing, which meant get high, have sex, and grow their hair long” (Stern and Stern 1990: 187). But the Angels were not really interested in revolutionary rhetoric and leftist philosophy. They were more interested in the availability of compliant young hippie women and in the smorgasbord of powerful new hippie drugs to experience. Thompson (1966) observed: “It puzzled them to be treated as symbolic heroes by people with whom they had nothing in common” (Thompson 1966: 238). Allen Ginsberg took to calling the Angels ‘the Angelic Barbarians’ (Stern and Stern 1990: 188). But it was not destined to last. As Stern and Stern rather succinctly put it, “... belligerent bikers and love children: it was a strange collusion, doomed to fail ...” (1990: 188). Essentially, they argued that the Angels were “... low class dudes – grease monkeys, day labourers, the chronically unemployable – who had been rejected by society ...”, whilst Hippies were “... children of privilege who voluntarily dropped out to follow a romantic ideal ...” (Stern and Stern 1990: 188).

This short lived association fractured in October of 1966 when a dozen Oakland *Hell's Angels* attacked an anti-war march staged by Berkley students, tearing up the sound system and pummelling demonstrators, with the promise to attack an even larger march planned for the next month. On the day before the peace march, Barger called a press conference and read a telegram he had sent to President Lyndon Johnson offering *Hell's Angels* support for the war in Vietnam. As Stern and Stern put it: “The Angels had blown it – it was the end of the *Hell's Angels* brief tenure as the noble-savage heroes of the counterculture” (Stern and Stern 1990: 189). This schism widened “... as the flower-power

dream evaporated, and violence became fashionable in the street-fighting years of 1968 and '69 ..." (Stern & Stern 1990: 189).

The *Hell's Angels* were to be ultimately held responsible for their part in what has been described as "... the symbolic expiration of the Woodstock Nation, the death of innocence, and the end of the sixties ..." - the disastrous (Rolling) 'Stones' free concert held at the Altamont Speedway (some thirty miles from Berkley) in December 1969 during their 'Sympathy for the Devil' tour (Stern and Stern 1990: 189). The Stones decided to hire the *Hell's Angels* as 'security guards', which resulted in outbreaks of violence in front of the stage when Angels beat concertgoers back with shortened pool cues. This violence culminated in the fatal stabbing of a black concertgoer, Meredith Hunter, in front of the stage (Stern and Stern 1990: 189). These brutal images were captured by the film crew filming the concert, and were subsequently used by the prosecution at the *Hell's Angel* assailant's homicide trial. The subsequent concert film, *Gimme Shelter*, contained the graphic violence and the stabbing incident, which greatly enhanced the *Hell's Angels* outlaw reputation internationally (Tamony 1970: 203, Lavigne 1987: 157-8, Reynolds 2000: 204, Osgerby 2005: 98 - 99).<sup>3</sup>

This change of fortune for the Californian *Hell's Angels* did nothing to reduce the international profile of outlaw bikers - all it did was increase the sense of menace and latent violence that has tended to surround them in the global psyche since that day.<sup>4</sup>

The January 1970 issue of the *Rolling Stone* magazine carried a major feature on the Altamont debacle, titled 'Let it Bleed,' the title of the prophetic *Rolling Stones*' album that was being promoted during that ill-fated tour. This publication was widely read by those interested in popular culture, including a number of the bikers that I spoke to during my research project. In fact one of my participants referred me specifically to a major *Hell's Angels* expose that had been published in the April 1979 issue of *Rolling Stone*. Although some twenty-five years had elapsed, my participant was able to tell me the correct name of the story, the year that it was published, and was only one month out with the edition it had

appeared in. He could still vividly remember the article, and gave me a very accurate account of what was recorded therein (despite his having lost his own copy of the article). He could also still clearly remember which one of his club-mates lost his original copy sometime in 1980! I was eventually able to source him a copy of the article. He was delighted, as he had previously gone to the extent of writing to *Rolling Stone* to see if he could purchase a back-copy. When we read it together, and discussed it, I was stunned with how accurate his description of the item had been, which indicated to me just how carefully he had read (and re-read) it when he had first encountered the article (this participant also produced a carefully preserved copy of the *University of Canterbury* student magazine, *Canta*, circa 1972, which contained a major article on ‘Bikies’, which will be discussed later (University of Canterbury 1972).

The *Hell’s Angels M.C.* has produced a number of celebrity ‘outlaws’ from its own ranks in recent years. The Kent (UK) *Hell’s Angel*, Ian ‘Maz’ Harris became a high profile, celebrity outlaw biker following the publication of his seminal book about outlaw biker life, *Bikers: Birth of a Modern-Day Outlaw* (1985), written on the back of his doctoral thesis (**Plate 2**). Harris subsequently wrote passionate (and articulate) articles about biker rights in a number of English publications up until his death in a motorcycle accident in 2000. His celebrity was arguably greatly enhanced by the incongruity of his apparently conscious choice to remain a *Hell’s Angel*, despite his achieving a PhD.<sup>5</sup> Thompson (1966) argues:

... The only difference between the Hell’s Angels and other outlaw clubs is that the Angels are more extreme. Most of the others are part-time outlaws, but the Angels play the role seven days a week: they wear their colours at home, on the street and sometimes even to work (Thompson 1966: 82).

Veno (2003) concurs:

... internationally, as with the Australian scene, there is no most notorious club, as the scene continually changes depending upon the events of the day. If I was pushed on the issue, I’d have to give the nod to the biggest club, the Hell’s Angels, by virtue of its size, the police pressure it experiences and the amount of consistent media coverage it receives. For many in the straight world, when the word

bikie is mentioned, the name Hell's Angels immediately springs to mind (Veno 2003: 81-2).

The media often use the generic term 'Hell's Angel' to refer to any tough biker figures, particularly in the United Kingdom.<sup>6</sup> The *Hell's Angels M.C.* arguably set the benchmark for all other outlaw biker clubs throughout the world. The structural template that the Angels developed as they evolved into an international 'outlaw' club in the 60s and 70s, has now become the generic 'outlaw' model that other clubs tend to adhere to (and are judged on). Regardless of their current relationship with the *Hell's Angels*, most outlaw biker clubs have a grudging respect and admiration for the Angels as hard-out, 24/7 'outlaws' (Veno 2003: 64, 257).

## 2. **Outlaws and the Biker Image**

The concept of 'outlaws' and the biker image of outlaw as hero is an important aspect in the construction of the outlaw biker sub-culture (Mills 2006: 192 –3, 196 – 9). Prassel (1993) argues:

Deep within American folklore rides a mysterious and significant figure. He comes to us through mists of fact and fiction, an incarnate mixture of right and wrong. On the one hand, this ever-changing image represents crime, violence and fear. On the other, it represents fearlessness, independence, and dedication. The figure poses a number of contradictions, including the true meanings of justice and freedom. Surrounded by legend, the outlaw endures as an enigma in our heritage (Prassel 1993: xi).

The perception that 'outlaws' are potentially dangerous is illustrated by Raymond Lee's (1995) 'Gangs and Outlaws' section in his book, *Dangerous Fieldwork* where he observes: "The phrase gangs and outlaws is a rather loose and catchall designation. It refers to groups with varying levels of organizational sophistication, frequently at odds with the wider society, who use violence for purposes of internal discipline and/or external aggression" (Lee 1995: 48). Lee goes on to say:

...outlaw bikers for instance, maintain strict boundaries between themselves and nonmembers (Wolf, 1991) ... Fearing infiltration by undercover police, they are recurrently suspicious and mistrustful of outsiders (Hopper & Moore, 1990). They are also resistant to standardised research instruments, such as questionnaires or formal interviews ... (Lee 1995: 49).

Whilst it can be argued that some societies do tend to somewhat glorify the outlaw more than others, the 'outlaw' has a place in all societies, regardless of whether it is an open, liberal society or of a more totalitarian nature. New outlaw figures tend to emerge at times of oppression, division, or conflict. The poster-boy image of revolutionary 'outlaws' remains the idealistic Argentinean doctor Che Guevara, the archetypal selfless revolutionary. But iconic outlaw figures in popular culture also include fictional characters from movies. Prominent amongst these iconic celluloid 'outlaw' figures is the internationally recognised photographic and artistic images of such film 'outlaws' as Marlon Brando's sneering gang-leader, 'Johnny Stabler' from *The Wild One*, and James Dean's troubled delinquent 'Jim Stark' from his *Rebel Without a Cause* (Harris 1985: 14, 21-5). These highly visible (though now somewhat dated) celluloid characters are immediately identifiable to persons today – persons who were not even born at the time that the movies came out, or who have not even seen the movies. This tends to reinforce the fact that elevation of an individual to 'an outlaw' has a great deal to do with the times that they lived in (and often in the manner of their premature deaths). Whilst there have been some acknowledged female outlaws (for example, the Indian bandit 'Queen,' Phoolan Devi), most outlaw figures are male.

The 'outlaw,' regardless of gender, tends to personify independence and freedom. Often this mythmaking overlooks serious flaws in the outlaw's character, with people preferring to see them more as resistance figures than as dangerous sociopaths (for example, Ned Kelly).<sup>7</sup> The media plays a key role in perpetuating these distorted representations of historical figures and events.<sup>8</sup> The mass media is also responsible at times for creating purely mythical 'outlaw-resistance' figures or events that over time become iconic metaphors for outlaws or acts of resistance in the public's collective memory.<sup>9</sup> I have discussed 'outlaw' films with a number of outlaw bikers and their associates, and found that most listed a number of the same films that I would list, if asked to list my favourite 'outlaw' films or 'outlaw' characters from film. Most were characters from relatively recent 'A' list films, which were considered more realistic than the dated, cheesy characters

from earlier films such as *The Wild One* and *Rebel Without a Cause*. In fact, most of my participants considered the banal biker ‘B’ films of the 1960s and 70s to be purely trash entertainment that was usually watched with others. These participants do not consider that these films left any real lasting impressions with them, as they did not strongly identify with many of the characters they viewed, or any of the shallow plots (i.e. this particular medium had little impact on self image, personal or group identity, or ‘style.’)

There was a consensus amongst my participants that perhaps one of the best recent examples of the portrayal of an admirable ‘outlaw’ character (with some redeeming features) was Clint Eastwood’s bravura performance as the stone-cold killer gunman, William ‘Bill’ Munny, in his seminal western, *Unforgiven* (1992).<sup>10</sup> Sometime back, I asked one of my participants, an intelligent and thoughtful man who appears to have a very clear understanding of what being an outlaw biker meant to him, to articulate his thoughts about the subject for me. He thought for a moment, then quoted me a line spoken by the character Pike Bishop to his rag-tag band of fellow-travellers at a time of pressure in Sam Peckinpah’s classic (1969) western outlaw movie, *The Wild Bunch*:

... We’re not gonna get rid of anybody. We’re gonna stick together,  
just like it used to be. When you side with a man, you stay with him.  
And if you can’t do that, you’re like some animal, you’re finished.  
We’re finished. All of us ...

His choice of this quotation from this landmark movie (from his teenage years) confirmed to me something that I had long suspected – that movies do have an influence on one’s perception of camaraderie and brotherhood. This quotation also confirmed for me that, at least for him, biker brotherhood is very much like any other serious social commitment (marriage, confirmation, pledging allegiance to the flag, etcetera) – it is a commitment to stand by things we hold dear (other people, our country, our religious faith, if we are so inclined), for better or worse, during good times or bad times, for richer or poorer. It would trivialise such commitments to argue that they are simply aped from films or literature, or performed by rote to satisfy some social convention. They are far more important than that. They are in fact enshrined in the oft unspoken bonds of friendship and loyalty that we forge with important others throughout our lives – people we emotionally



commit to, people we strongly identify with, people we trust, respect, admire. These social commitments are the glue that binds our social relationships with our friends and ‘families.’ When such trust is betrayed, it is considered to be a major betrayal because we are being betrayed by people we trusted implicitly – people we have made a commitment to (and that we believed had made a similar commitment to us).

*The Wild Bunch* has perhaps best portrayed the concept of ‘outlaw’ brotherhood, by portraying strong, independent characters being continually pushed by circumstance towards the margins – doomed men living out of their time, throwbacks to an earlier age where a man could live by his own code with few restrictions. Prassel (1993) describes the movie as ‘achieving an almost lyrical romanticism amid extreme violence,’ and goes on to observe that many of Peckinpah’s films featured, “highly individualistic characters, emotionally and spiritually crippled, fighting nearly hopeless battles against outside forces” (Prassel 1993: 315).

‘The outlaw’ is therefore a very potent symbol to rebellious youth.

### 3. **The Motorcycle**

International images of ‘outlaw’ bikers that have appeared in the mass media and have become part of popular culture have resulted in large British and American motorcycles becoming synonymous with ‘outlaw’ bikers. Whilst the motorcycle *per se* is generically represented in the mass media as a metaphor for independence, freedom and conspicuous consumption, the ‘outlaw’ motorcycle (particularly a customised *Harley-Davidson* motorcycle), is a far more complex concept, and remains central to the ‘outlaw’ bikers’ generic identity, as will be demonstrated later in this thesis. Bikers may ride motorcycles, but ‘outlaw’ bikers generally want far more from their motorcycle than just the stock factory model with whatever extras they can afford (Hopper and Moore 1983: 60, Montgomery 1983: 333, Schouten and McAlexander 1995: 48). Outlaw bikers invariably customise their motorcycles to transform them into an extension of themselves. Thompson (1966: 99 - 100) describes the attitude of an Angel (named Pete) to his motorcycle:

Like most other Angels, he regards the factory product only in terms of potential – a bundle of good raw material, but hardly a machine that any man with class would want to call his own (Thompson 1966: 99-100).

Thompson goes on to argue:

... The outlaws tend to see the bikes as personal monuments, created in their own image, however abstract, and they develop an affection for them that is hard for outsiders to understand. It seems like a pose or even a perversion – and maybe it is, but to bike freaks it is very real. Anybody who has ever owned one of the beasts will always be a bit queer for them. Not the little bikes, but the big temperamental bastards, the ones that respond to the accelerator like a bucking horse to a whip ... (Thompson 1966: 99-100).

The generic ‘outlaw’ motorcycle evolved in the 1960s – elegant, customised, powerful, machines designed to be ridden with flare and élan by unkempt, reckless biker types with scant regard for their personal safety. The iconic biker movie of that period was without doubt *Easy Rider* (1969) – Peter Fonda’s ‘Captain America’ chopper motorcycle firmly established the customised ‘Chopper’ motorcycle as the ultimate symbol of ‘outlaw’ freedom. The ‘outlaw’ motorcycle remains the central symbol of this uncompromising subculture, despite the fact that today, many older outlaw bikers probably use motorcars in their daily lives more than their symbolic outlaw ‘steeds.’ Internationally however, outlaw motorcycle ‘clubs’ continue to stubbornly cling to the ‘outlaw’ motorcycle, particularly the American *Harley-Davidson*, as an iconic outlaw image and as a symbol of their identity. “The Harley-as-horse metaphor, common in biker art, poetry and fiction, is central to various personae created in the minds and public performances of Harley owners” (Schouten and McAlexander 1995: 52, Seate 2003). And the global *Harley-Davidson* marketing machine continues to actively promote this image in their high-powered marketing strategies. In the age of globalisation, the ‘hero’ and the ‘outlaw’ remains a potent marketing tool (Mark and Pearson 2001: 133 – 35, Schouten and McAlexander 1995: 54).

‘Captain America’s’ chopper motorcycle has gone on to become an outlaw biker icon.<sup>11</sup>

Any outlaw biker who has seen the movie will discuss the merits of the ‘Captain America’ bike verses the ‘Billy bike’, which was the more conventional customised ‘bobber’

motorcycle ridden by Dennis Hopper's character in the movie (and, of course, the great *Easyrider* movie soundtrack album, that remains an outlaw biker favourite to this day). These riders customised their motorcycles, making each machine (and it's rider) unique. Their very size, power, lack of safety features, unique paint-jobs and sleek appearance makes man and machine unique – they have an identity all of their own, and are therefore transformed. These customised motorcycles therefore confirmed chopper motorcycles as transformative – they transform their riders from regular riders on stock machines to 'outlaw' riders riding 'outlaw' machines (Hopper and Moore 1983: 60, Montgomery 1983: 333, Schouten and McAlexander 1995: 57 – 58, Yates 1999: 220).<sup>12</sup> Hebdige (2004) argued that the 1960s mods appropriated the motor scooter ("a formerly ultra-respectable means of transport") and transformed it into a "weapon and a symbol of solidarity" (Osgerby 2004: 119). The same could be argued for the 'chopper' and 'bobber.' Between wars, and post World War II, motorcycles were considered to be a respectable and affordable mode of working class transportation, and an appropriate recreational vehicle for those who could afford them (without the taint of ownership being seen as an example of a particularly extravagant form of conspicuous consumption). The 'Café Racer, and later the 'chopper' and the 'Bobber' took the acceptable utilitarian motorcycle and transformed it into a personal statement about the rider (Clay 1998). As Harris (1985) observed:

... The day had dawned when the motorcycle ceased, for all time, to be exclusively either cheap ride-to-work transport for the financially hard-pressed manual worker or the sporting mount of the more adventurous bourgeois. It became instead the object by which a specifically working-class subcultural style was generated and sustained. It was a commodity reappropriated and redefined until it came to represent a symbol of resistance to the all-embracing hegemony of the dominant culture ... (Harris 1985: 22).

The post-World-War II fringe bikers who entered the public psyche at Hollister transformed the 'souped-up' larger motorcycles into metaphors for deviance, which was further accentuated by the emergence of the customized 'bobber' and 'chopper.' As Hoskins (1998) argued, people fashion their identities "in a particular way, constructing a 'self' for public consumption" (Hoskins 1998: 1).

Mark and Pearson (2001) use Jung's very descriptive term 'archetypes' to argue that 'hero and the outlaw archetypes' can be used to build extraordinary brands, such as Harley-Davidson's use of the outlaw biker sub-culture to market their motorcycles to primarily main-stream, older recreational riders (Mark and Pearson 2001: 133-5). They observe that Harley-Davidson motorcycles are not inexpensive, so their owners are often professional people who 'want to express their wild side.' They go on to argue:

Harleys are also associated with the Hell's Angels and other Outlaw groups ... The macho image was aided by the bikers in Marlon Brando's *The Wild One* in the 1950s and has grown since, although the "ladies of Harley" make up 10 percent of riders (in the US). As one might expect, not only do customers sport tattoos, but 'the most popular tattoo in the United States is the Harley-Davidson symbol.' Riders see Harleys as more than a motorcycle – more like a set of attitudes, a lifestyle that is not just about freedom (as the Explorer (sic) might be), but freedom from mainstream values and conventions. A typical ad shows a remote cabin with the tag line, "If you didn't have to answer to anyone, what would you do?" (Mark and Pearson 2001: 134).

David A. Aaker (2001) observed:

Harley riders often sport black leather, heavy boots, chrome, conspicuous weaponry, long hair, boots (sic), and body piercing – as well as tattoos. Harley gatherings have the character of Outlaw bands coming together, in contrast to the wholesomeness of Regular Guy/Gal Saturn (sic) reunions ... (Mark and Pearson 2001: 134).

Mark and Pearson (2001) observe that the Harley web page challenges riders to answer one question:

Suppose time takes a picture – one picture that represents your entire life here on earth. You have to ask yourself how you'd rather be remembered. As a pasty, web-wired computer wiz, strapped to an office chair? Or, as a leather-clad adventurer who lived life to the fullest astride a Harley-Davidson. You can decide which it is, but think quickly. Time is framing up that picture, and it's got a pretty itchy shutter finger ... (Mark and Pearson 2001: 134-5).

Turner (1967, 1969) argued that symbols were multi-vocal, in that they may represent many things. Multivocality endows ceremonies, even those of the simplest form, with multiple levels of meaning, with referents "from cosmology to social relations" (Swatos 2006:2). How this applies to the motorcycle will become apparent below. Geertz believes that it is the task of the anthropologist to interpret the "web of significances within which

humans find themselves embedded as cultural creatures” (Lambek 2002: 81, Swatos 2006: 1). He argues that human behaviour is fundamentally symbolic and is therefore laden with meaning for social actors. Geertz (1966) defined ‘culture’ as “...historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols – a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms “ (Banton 1966: 3). Therefore, the primary task for the ethnographer is to understand the “webs of significance which people themselves have spun” (Marshall 1998: 657). Whilst some of the rituals and symbols that can be observed in outlaw motorcycle clubs are crude and offensive to some, they are also unambiguous, and are designed to establish symbolic boundaries between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders,’ and to “fuse multiple referents,” thus enabling adherents to symbolically affirm their existence as a community (Geertz 1973: 98 - 9, Swatos 2006: 1).

Having discussed Geertz, I will now go on to discuss the role that the motorcycle plays as a ‘dominant’ or ‘key’ symbol in the OMC subculture (Turner 1967: 20, 30-1, Lambek 2002: 61-82, Ortner 2002: 159). Ortner (2002) articulated an analysis for recognising and using ‘key symbols’, and how the symbols operate, arguing that they may be discovered by virtue of a number of reliable indicators “which point to a cultural focus of interest” (Lambek 2002: 158-67). Ortner’s ‘key symbols are Turner’s ‘dominant symbols (The motorcycle is one such symbol. Ortner (2002) argues that there are two types of main symbols: “summarizing and elaborating” (Ortner 2002: 161). Summarizing symbols combine several complete ideas into one complete symbol or sign that the participant accurately perceives. Elaborating symbols, on the other hand, “are symbols valued for their contribution to the ordering or sorting out of experience” (Ortner 2002: 161). Both types of symbols pertain to the symbols associated with OMCs. When a symbol is broken down like this, a person can more effectively communicate the idea surrounding the symbol to others. Therefore, many of the symbols readily identifiable with OMCs, such as the bikers ‘colours’ and the ‘1%er’ symbol, unequivocally identifies the individual wearing it to both insiders and outsiders as a being an individual actively engaged in that subculture.

The 'outlaw' motorcycle is also a potent visual symbol of rebellion, and is readily identifiable to others as symbolising both a deviance from the norm, and indicative of membership of the sub-cultural 'community' of bikers and bike enthusiasts that are seen as being at the margins of the mainstream motorcycle community (the '1%ers'). Hopper and Moore (1983) argue that it "is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the motorcycle to the outlaw clubs", arguing that the motorcycle is "so dominant as to render other interests not only secondary but trivial" (Hopper and Moore 1983: 60). They go on to observe that, "... an outlaw strips off all the accessories and customises a bike to his own taste. He changes it so much that it does not resemble the machine he started with ... only after long hours of devoted work does a motorcycle become an outlaw's chopper" (Hopper and Moore 1983: 60). Thompson (1966: 96 – 104) confirms, and considerably elaborates on this observation, arguing " ... the fact that many Angels have virtually created their bikes out of stolen, bartered or custom-made parts only half explains the intense attachment they have for them" (Thompson 1966: 97). Ballard (1997), talking about motorcycle clubs in Northern Ireland, confirms that the concept of the 'outlaw' motorcycle is an international one, when she argues, "...perhaps most important of all, motorcycles must be "chopped" or customised ... straightforward factory produced machines are not likely to be accepted by MCs ... " (Ballard 1997: 109). As Mills (2006) argues, "...the loud roar of the choppers in Roger Corman's drive-in biker films displaced the need for any interrogation of the rebel's social function ..." (Mills 2006: 132). As Harris (1985) put it, "...to ride a motorcycle meant much more than driving the family saloon – it was exciting, it was noisy, it was brash and, what's more, it got up the nose of authority" (Harris 1985: 22).

Thanks to the film *Easyrider*, and to the many media images of customised motorcycles transported across the world since the late 1960s, the 'chopper' motorcycle is now unequivocally seen as a symbolic extension of the 'outlaw' biker and an internationally recognisable sub-cultural metaphor for outlaw bikers, regardless to the stated or implied disposition of the individual riding the machine at the time. In fact, Hopper and Moore (1983) argue that, " ... when one becomes a "chopper freak" and starts customizing his

motorcycle, his sources of information are those who ride choppers – outlaws” (Hopper and Moore 1983: 63). They are essentially arguing that whilst one can review images of customised motorcycles via a globalised mass media, real-world advice and assistance in support of a personal customising project invariably comes from like-minded enthusiasts.

#### 4. **Risk**

Risk is an essential element of an outlaw biker’s life, and this is encapsulated in the outlaw motorcycle. As Harris (1985) observed:

...to ride a motorcycle, and to ride it in a fashion that displayed an obvious contempt for both personal safety and the exigencies of the Highway Code, was in itself rebellious. The more Joe Public was shocked and irritated by the spectacle, the better it felt ... (Harris 1985: 22).

Outlaw’ bikers rarely ride safe, conventional, moderately powered motorcycles (Thompson 1966: 98 – 99). ‘Outlaw’s’ ride large, brutish, customised, ‘outlaw choppers’ (Hopper and Moore 1983: 60, Thompson 1966: 96 – 103). Lyng (2005) argues that risk behaviours related to “... sexuality, substance use, motor vehicle operations, crime and interpersonal conflict and violence have been particularly prominent in the subcultural patterns of postwar youth populations ...” (Lyng 2005: 8). Deborah Lupton (1999) citing Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1973), argues:

Some risks, like the famous wild car trip taken by Hunter S. Thompson and his attorney while high on drugs between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, as recounted in his book ‘Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas’ (1973), are part of adventures, requiring the active embracing of danger as part of the high: driving at high speeds while under the influence of various drugs, legal and illicit. Excesses and outrages of all sorts must be built into the trip in order to transcend the limitations of ordinary landscaping, to construct a realm so far away from home that literally and metaphorically you are beyond reach ... For such trips, you must take risks ... (Lupton 1999: 151).

Lyng (1990, 2005) uses Hunter Thompson’s descriptive term ‘Edgework’ (with particular reference to OMCs) to analyse the ready enhancing of risk activities (Lyng 2005: 3 – 14, Lupton 1999: 151).<sup>13</sup> ‘Edgework’ takes place around cultural boundaries: such as those between life and death, conscious and unconscious, sanity and insanity, and an ordered sense of self and environment against a disordered sense of self and environment (Lyng

2005: 4, Lupton 1999: 151). 'Edgework' is also characterised by an emphasis on skilled performance of the dangerous activity, involving the ability to maintain control over a situation that verges on complete chaos that requires, above all, 'mental toughness,' the ability not to give in to fear. It does not involve the complete relinquishment of control, therefore: to do so would be tantamount to attempting suicide or self-harming.

Motorcycles are ideal for enhanced risk activities – motorcycles are dangerous enough to ride in traffic when you are sober, let alone to ride at speed when you are under the influence of drink or drugs. From experience, motorcycle enthusiasts who live for the freedom of riding powerful stripped down motorcycles tend to subscribe to a 'ride it like you stole it' philosophy. Harris (1985) summed it up well when he observed that a get-way-from-it-all, exhilarating high-speed motorcycle at night was a great way to recover from the boredom and grind of the working day. He argued:

... you don't have to take your problem to the United Nations; you can banish the 'Summertime Blues' just by twisting back the throttle and watching the speedo needle arc its way across the dial towards oblivion. To hell with the danger. So long as Buddy, Richie and the Big Bopper were up there watching over you – like rock 'n' roll, you'd never die – nothing could go wrong. And if did? Heaven had to be better than Berdoo or, for that matter, Battersea ... (Harris 1985: 22).

Thompson (1966) observed:

To see a lone Angel screaming through traffic – defying all rules, limits and patterns – is to understand the motorcycle as an instrument of anarchy, a tool of defiance, even a weapon. A Hell's Angel on foot can look pretty foolish ... but there is nothing pathetic about the sight of an Angel on his bike. The whole – a man and machine together – is far more than the sum of its parts. His motorcycle is the one thing in life he has absolutely mastered. It is his only valid status symbol, his equalizer, and he pampers it the same way a busty Hollywood starlet pampers her body ... (Thompson 1966: 96).

Outlaw bikers are expected to maintain discipline during formal road movements, but from my personal experience, and from the accounts of my participants, bored bikers riding singularly with a group on more informal road trips, often succumb to the temptation to suddenly up the ante, and overtake frustratingly slow streams of motorcars, often by howling up the centre-lane to over-take alarmed motorists who often do not hear or see them coming until they are subjected to the blast of the powerful machines roaring by the



driver's window. Or sometimes up the inside, which is even more alarming. Again from personal experience, and from the accounts of my participants, this can be a hugely exhilarating experience, but it but does little to endear the biker to other motorists, or to the authorities. And if they are riding in company, it does tend to compel others to give chase. Those who are not on top of their game are at greater risk than those who have not imbibed during the road trip, but most will willingly put themselves at risk by engaging in this activity so as not to lose face.

Victor Turner (1969) argued that community has a symbolic character in the sense here of creating powerful links between members of a society or social groups (Cohen 1985, Delanty 2003: 45-6, Turner 1969). Cohen (1985) argues that community is based on the symbolic construction of boundaries. Boundaries become symbolic of the communities they enclose. The most significant kind of symbolic action is the creation of boundaries by which the community differentiates itself from others. Symbolization is the affirmation of the existing order of the community by boundary construction. In other words, community is seen as, "...a cluster of symbolic and ideological map references with which the individual is socially orientated" (Cohen 1985: 57, Delanty 2003: 46).

Veno (2003) talks about 'risk-shift' effect, which he argues is simply that people in a group are much more likely to make more extreme decisions than they would as individuals (Veno 2003: 184). Veno supports his argument by citing comments that were made by Justice Roden before he sentenced those convicted of the Milperra motorcycle swap-meet massacre in Sydney in 1984. Justice Roden observed:

... A fierce loyalty, and a propensity for violence, which rightly or wrongly typify the popular image of such clubs, are clearly indicated by the evidence of this case ... a need to belong, and to enjoy a close relationship and bond with others, can be readily understood. So too can pride in physical strength and courage. But, like most admirable qualities, these can be carried to excess ... (Veno 2003: 184).

Most of my participants, in fact most of the outlaw bikers that I have ever met, have at one time or another received moderate to serious injuries from assaults during their club days. Some have been shot, or been present when others have been shot, whilst others have been

stabbed, or seriously beaten with blunt instruments in situations where they could have lost their lives. But experienced outlaw bikers are not normally unduly perturbed when exposed to violence or the prospect of impending violence, as they usually have developed considerable 'street-smarts' when it comes to identifying potential risk.

However, those involved in the very early Christchurch clubs had no inkling that their regular skirmishes with their 'significant others' could ultimately lead to homicide. As one participant observed (about internecine gang violence), "... it sort of goes with the territory ... you don't really look for it, it just sort of happens". However, he then went on to say, "... but we were all really shocked when Greg (*Devil's Henchman*, Gregory Slack) was killed (on 24 December 1974) ... I suppose you could say it was a turning point really ... we were just young guys, and no one really thought about getting killed like that ...but in some ways, it sort of bonded us all together as well ... " (Twentyman 1975: 76, Ferris 1995, Ch. 12: 3). Ferris (1995), writing about the immediate response (from other *Devils Henchmen* to the stabbing incident), wrote, "... our hearts galvanised with new strength, Greg was now a martyr ..." (Ferris 1995, 13: 1). From my personal observations, and from the comments of those who stayed with their respective clubs and went on to take part in the brief, violent 'Gang War in Christchurch,' which officially ended in March 1975, they have largely remain bonded to each other to this day. Risk, I would argue, is the key element of 'biker brotherhood' that can bond one member to another, as with many other formative experiences involving risk and violence. In many ways, their conditioning is similar to that of experienced police officers and of military personnel who have experienced active service in a war zone where they must rely on others.

I have had numerous discussions with bikers about potentially dangerous experiences on road trips, and successful (and unsuccessful) police chases – risk enhances the experience, and if all involved survive, it always makes for a great story. One former Christchurch outlaw biker is well known for an incident where he nearly outran his police pursuers, finally abandoning his motorcycle and taking off across open country where he went to

ground, before ultimately being located and arrested. But he had made the police work for their ultimate apprehension, so this added to his legend. Another biker talked of an incident where two carousing *Epitaph Riders*, reportedly dressed as *Batman* and *Robin*, become minor local living legends in the early 70s when they become involved in a wild street brawl with several other men after leaving a fancy-dress party. Their exploits were ultimately recounted in court, and from my recollection, reported in *The Press* newspaper, which adding to the legend. I can recall the incident myself, as it was a story told and retold by police officers as well. My efforts to tie down a date resulted in considerable hilarity, as participants asked others if they could narrow down the date for me. Another biker recently recounted to me a spectacular motorcycle vs. motorcar accident that he survived, where he rode his Harley at speed into a side of a motorcar that had jumped a stop sign in front of him. He was catapulted over the bonnet to land relatively unscathed on the road on the other side of the vehicle. He was relatively unconcerned about his near miss, being more concerned about the timely facilitation of repairs to his motorcycle. Several of my participants recounted to me blunt instrument head trauma and other assorted injuries that they or their club-mates had received over the years from violent attacks in a rather casual, matter-of-fact way, demonstrating that these sort of incidents are not unexpected or extraordinary in the outlaw biker world.

Thompson (1966) talks about ‘going over the high side’:

... a nasty experience which one Angel supposedly described like this: “We’ve all been over the high side, baby. You know what that is? It’s when your bike starts sliding when you steam into a curve at seventy or eighty ... she slides towards the high side of the curve, baby, until she hits a curb or a rail or a soft shoulder or whatever’s there, and then she flips ... That’s what you call making a classic get-off, baby (Thompson 1966: 103).

Interestingly, Thompson feels compelled to then tell of his own experience of ‘going over the high-side’ himself, to establish his personal credentials as a biker who knows what he is talking about. One of my participants tells of the enhanced and distorted sensory perceptions that he experienced whilst riding across Christchurch in the mid 1970s (with all

the risks involved in riding a large motorcycle in built up areas), during an intense 'acid trip' (Lysergide or LSD):

I was riding across town, and was tripping at the time ... everything, the lights and that ... were sort of enhanced and distorted at the same time ... it was really weird ... it was a cold night and I was riding with no gloves on, but I didn't feel the cold at the time ... I remember finally getting home, and standing in the garden looking at the moon for a while ... and I remember looking at the old cat and remember thinking that it was looking at me a bit strange ... another time, I remember being on the forecourt of a petrol station when I was tripping, and I remember seeing a police car go by, and I can remember I started to feel really paranoid, because I'd used my German helmet earlier to pour some gas in the tank of my bike a bit earlier, and my hair stunk of gas, and I was throwing water over my head to get the smell out when I saw three cops in the car staring at me, obviously wondering what the hell I was doing throwing water all over the forecourt ...

These experiences are something that he is not particularly proud of today, but they were profound and memorable for him at the time, and are memories that he has retained from his former life. The fact that the journey was completed on a large and powerful motorcycle made the experience even more memorable. He had demonstrated his skill – he was the master of his machine. But deliberate risk-taking is perhaps also enhanced when experienced in the company of others, when done on behalf of others, perhaps even for the entertainment of others, or as a demonstration of the risk-takers commitment to, or trust of, others. Biker associates and prospects are expected to 'show class' if they want to ultimately become patched members. Showing class often involves risk taking (Osgerby 2005: 89-91, Thompson 1966: 68-9, 206). But there is a big difference between just being 'staunch,' and the stuff required of a future patched member, and being foolhardy, reckless, or outright dangerous, which can put others at risk.<sup>14</sup> According to my participants, some club associates and members are more problematic than others, and regularly cause friction within their own club, and with others. Most members tend to avoid their more problematic club mates, if at all possible, as they are often the catalyst for spontaneous violence, or tend to attract the attention of the authorities. My participants tended to discuss being the subject of physical assaults in a rather casual way, and often with wry humour. None overplayed the incident they were describing – their accounts were all

rather matter-of-fact and understated. One told me, "...and then he just rushed over and hit me over the head with a piece of reinforcing rod ...", whilst another rather stoically observed (about another incident when he was outnumbered and assaulted by members of a rival club, said, " .. and then I got a fuckin' good kicking. ... there was fuck all I could do about it ... I was outnumbered, so I just had to take it". Another simply said, "... then they stabbed me ...' as though it was a logical progression from the physical assault he had sustained. However, OMCs in recent years have become acutely conscious of their ability to attract bad press, so many now go out of their way to tone down their earlier excesses in public places, so there are a lot less skirmishing in public places as there was in the 70s and 80s.<sup>15</sup>

Another aspect of risk sometimes relevant to the OMC identity has to do with the use of narcotics. The free and easy 1960s Hippy's use of cannabis and hallucinogenic drugs took a darker turn in the late sixties and early 70s, with a return by some to the seedy needle culture surrounding heroin use. This use of IV drugs was recognised as a threat to the stability of OMCs, and resulted in most clubs specifying in their club rules that any members caught using a needle without good reason (diabetes, etcetera), would be unceremoniously expelled from the club (Lavigne 1999: 414; Veno 2003: 199 – 200).

Ferris (1995) wrote:

... the (club name withheld – my edit) had a strict rule about drugs, so as to be hard and ready to fight at all times. We believed that marijuana made people soft, and in fact there was more L.S.D. (Acid) around at that point (my insertion - 1973/74). This rule was of course bent privately occasionally" (Ferris 1995, Ch. 13: 1).

Whilst there are similarities between the governing rules and symbols that form the basis of the constitutions of most domestic and international motorcycles clubs, these rules have been refined to suit local conditions (Veno 2003: 97 – 98). All clubs or organizations find that they have to have formal rules if they are to survive and flourish. Outlaw clubs are no different. Veno (2003) notes that most clubs use 'Robert's Rules of Meeting Procedures' to guide their formal club meetings (Veno 2003: 86). Probably of all of the 'gangs' in

New Zealand, the *Mongrel Mob* (today, primarily ‘a street gang’) is the most anarchic, yet they too have clearly defined ‘boundaries’ to symbolically construct their community (Cohen, 1985: 11-14, Payne 1997, Dennehy and Newbold 2001). If there is a specific social problem that may compromise a club, or perhaps jeopardise its security, the club will promulgate rules to address the specific issue, as is the case with the refined form of methamphetamine known as ‘P’ or ‘Pure’ that is viewed by some as having achieved epidemic proportions in New Zealand today. Most clubs have a ‘no burning’ policy to try and stop member smoking the addictive form of the drug (but many still allow them to snort it). In the early 1970s, New Zealand outlaw clubs followed the lead of overseas clubs and banned the use of intravenous drugs of addiction, as discussed in Chapter three (Ferris 1995, Ch. 13: 1, Veno 2003: 102 – 3, 199 – 200). My participants who were involved in the establishment of clubs in the late 60s/early 70s confirm that their initial ‘club rules’ were limited to the obvious, and followed what they had read in books such as Thompson (1966) and Reynolds (1967). One participant told me, “...I actually wrote up a set of rules for the club ... I took them from that Frank Reynolds book and we sort of adapted them ...”. Ferris (1995) records that his club almost immediately adopted rules about the drugs that could and could not be consumed (Ferris 1995, 13:1).

Whilst society today chooses to treat drug addiction as a health issue, the less politically correct biker clubs pragmatically saw it as a major security issue. Whilst some ‘outlaw’ bikers do routinely use (and some supply) recreational drugs, drugs of (physical) addiction, particularly when introduced intravenously into the body, create ‘junkies.’ Junkies or ‘smack heads’ are invariably unreliable, contaminate others, thieve from those around them as their addictions reach critical mass, and often end up becoming paid police informants. Most ‘outlaw’ bikers that I know, including many of my participants, genuinely detest ‘needle junkies.’ They tell me that they consider them weak and pathetic individuals, and then deliberately socially isolate them. One of my participants became aware that an old biker associate (who had dropped out of the scene some years back and subsequently drifted into heroin addiction had recently returned to administering drugs intravenously,

and confronted him about it, exhorting him to seek treatment. My participant was quite upset by his friend's condition, and spoke to me at some length about it, as we discussed strategies to help him address the problem with the individual involved. But my participant is realistic – he said that if his friend does not take ownership of the problem and seek treatment for his addiction, he would have to distance himself from him. He rationalised his decision as follows:

...the ball's in his court ... I'll try to help him as much as I can, but if he carries on using the needle (makes a needle-in-the-vein motion, as we are talking), I'm afraid he's on his own – he's a mate, but I've got no time for needle junkies, and don't want to be around them ...<sup>16</sup>.

So whilst drugs add to the risks involved in outlaw biker life, not all drugs are acceptable for consumption by those involved in the OMC subculture (Ferris 1995, Ch. 13: 1, Veno 2003: 102 – 3, 199–200). I will talk more about the use of drugs later in this Chapter, when I discuss risk, and again in Chapters Five and Six when I discuss the evolution of outlaw clubs in the South Island of New Zealand in the 1960s/70s.

#### 5. **Hell's Angels, Moral Panic and the Media**

After Hollister, the 'outlaw' motorcycle subculture across the United States started to see the emergence of the more hard-edged full-time OMC model that we see today, particularly in California. But many of these clubs often struggled to survive and flourish until the mid 60s when the Californian *Hell's Angels* started to achieve notoriety, thanks to the mass media's reporting of a number of highly colourful 'incidents' involving members of the *Hell's Angels M.C.*

In 1964, the *Hell's Angels M.C.*, created in 1948 from the ashes of the Hollister bikers, was scratching out a precarious existence in Southern California, with many of the remaining Angels from San Bernardino ('Berdoo'), Hayward and Sacramento gravitating to the Oakland chapter to boost numbers (Thompson 1966: 36, 47, 73, Hopper and Moore 1983: 58). The Angel's Frisco chapter's numbers had dropped to eleven, which resulted in the Oakland Angels physically attacking their own brothers, who they felt had dishonoured their colours by letting their numbers drop to such an abysmal level (Thompson 1966: 47).

By early 1965, they then found themselves in the media spotlight, largely as the result of rape allegations arising from a *Hell's Angels* Labour Day run to Monterey in 1964, and other tacky incidents of a similar nature. At that time, the Angels had limited financial resources and were constantly feuding with rival clubs (the *East Bay Diablos*, et al) as well as fighting amongst themselves, so found themselves in a rather precarious position, with several of their key members in jail or on remand awaiting trial (Thompson 1966: 15). As Thompson argues, they were vulnerable, and destined for obscurity, until a serendipitous event occurred that immediately propelled them into the national (US) media spotlight, where they have arguably remained ever since (Thompson 1966: 33).

Towards the end of 1964, the California Attorney-General, Thomas C. Lynch, then new to the job, commissioned a report on the outlaw motorcycle clubs that was subsequently released in March of 1965. This 15-page report was largely assembled from questionnaires that Lynch sent to, "... a hundred sheriffs, district-attorneys and police chiefs," asking for information on the *Hell's Angels* "... and other disreputables." He also asked for suggestions on "how the law might deal with them" (Lynch Report 1965, Thompson 1966: 31 – 32). Thompson (1966) described the reports as reading "like a plot synopsis of Mickey Spillane's (sic) worst dreams" (Thompson 1966: 32). This report, which was to become known simply as 'The Lynch Report,' luridly described the motorcycle clubs as a major threat to law and order. Thompson notes that a *New York Times* correspondent picked up on the report, and filed a lengthy and lurid commentary that was the impetus for a national (and later international) media circus. As Thompson (1966) put it, "... It was sex, violence, crime craziness and filth – all in one package ..." (Thompson 1966: 33). A "reputed" New Zealand *Hell's Angels* chapter was mentioned in this report (Lynch Report 1965: 3). There was an explosion of 'motorcycle gang' stories in American mass media, particularly stories about the real and imagined exploits of the *Hell's Angels M.C.* Attorney-General Lynch became an immediate media celebrity, and continued to regale the media with lurid second-hand (or third-hand) tales of crime and debauchery. Because he was a person in authority, and because the report was cobbled together from police files,



Lynch's often wild and unsubstantiated claims, obvious inaccuracies, and downright spurious mythmaking were largely accepted as fact. Thompson (1966) observed, "... Both *Newsweek* and *Time* compared the 1963 'invasion' of Porterville with a film called *The Wild One*, based on a similar incident at Hollister, California, in 1947, and starring Marlon Brando ..." (Thompson 1966: 33). Veno (2003) claims, "... Governments readily accepted the report's recommendations that additional resources be allocated to police to rein in the outlaw motorcycle clubs..." (Veno 2003: 189). He argues that Police pressure following the release of this report had an immediate impact, with membership dropping as members were imprisoned or dropped out of the clubs to avoid 'constant police harassment.' But, he argues:

..., the tactic backfired on the police, with the clubs swinging sharply towards the use of crime and violence. The members least likely to stay in the clubs were those who were most law-abiding, whereas the bad arses, formerly only a small percentage of the clubs, were now in the majority, setting the path and policies of the clubs ...  
(Veno 2003: 189).

Largely as the result of the release of the 'Lynch Report,' and the subsequent media circus, closely followed by the success of Hunter Thompson's book *Hell's Angels* in 1966, Sonny Barger, and his Californian *Hell's Angels* become either the dark personification of outlaw biker deviance, or were romanticised as the last-free-men (Harris, 1985: 9, Osgerby 2005: 164 - 7).

## 6. **Mods and Rockers and Moral Panic in the United Kingdom**

As seen in the previous chapter, Post war youth culture has consumed many seminal images, many of which would have had little impact globally if it were not for the media. The global media has also produced a number of highly influential writers and publications that have been hugely important in showcasing subcultures internationally. It was the 1960s rockers that were the recipients of the American 'outlaw' biker model, when it crossed the Atlantic to the United Kingdom, a melding of styles that subsequently produced the distinctly English 'outlaw' biker/'Hell's Angel' variant that would later provide an

alternative to the United States template for Australasian outlaw bikers, seeking to define their generic identity, via the international mass media.

Moral panics are often related to the activities of the young. John Springhall (1998) in his *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830-1996* argued:

Whenever the introduction of a new mass medium is defined as a threat to the young, we can expect a campaign by adults to regulate, ban or censor, followed by a lessening of interest until the appearance of a new medium reopens public debate. Each new panic develops as if it were the first time such issues have been debated in public and yet the debates are strikingly similar (Springhall 1998: 7).

Given the right impetus, youth activities, popular culture and the mass media will at times lead to moral panics as happened in the UK in 1964 with the Mods and the Rockers (Becker 1963: 135, 147-163). Howard Baker's treatise on British youth from the period, *Sawdust Caesar: The Pioneers of Youth Rebellion* (1999), borrows its title from the highly publicised vitriolic comments made from the bench by the Chairman of the Margate Magistrates, Doctor George Simpson, during the sentencing of a mod charged with 'threatening behaviour' following the 'riots' at Margate in 1964. Stanley Cohen (2002), argues that Simpson's rant is worth quoting in full because it was really meant for a much wider audience:

... It is not likely that the air of this town has ever been polluted by the hordes of hooligans, male and female, such as we have seen this weekend and of whom you are an example. These long-haired, mentally unstable, petty little hoodlums, these sawdust Caesar's who can only find courage like rats, in hunting in packs, came to Margate with the avowed intent of interfering with the life and property of its inhabitants. Insofar as the law gives us power, this court will not fail to use the prescribed penalties. It will, perhaps, discourage you and others of your kidney (sic) who are infected with this vicious virus, that you will go to prison for three months ... (Cohen 2002: 87).

Cohen argues that these and other extravagant comments made from the bench elevated Doctor Simpson to the status of folk hero:

He personalized the forces of good against which the forces of evil were massed. Like all such folk heroes, he, single-handed – 'a small man in a light blue suit' (Daily Express, 19 May 1964) – had overcome sheer brute strength. 'The Quiet Man Who Rocks the Thugs', had his personality, career and views on various social issues presented to the

public. He told reporters that he realized from the beginning that he was dealing not just with a local fracas but also with something that had become a national problem. It had reached 'colossal national proportions'... he was aware of a 'general pattern of deliberate viciousness' ... scooters and motorbikes were 'almost in the nature of offensive weapons' and he wished he had the power to deprive hooligans of their means of transport (Cohen 2002: 88-9).

Spokespersons like Doctor Simpson tend to provide ready-made headlines for the media, regardless to their objectivity, their reasoning, or even the validity of their vitriolic statements. Cohen observes:

Virtually every court report quoted Dr Simpson's 'Sawdust Caesars' speech in full and his terminology significantly influenced the mass media symbolization and the process of spurious attribution. His phrases were widely used as headlines ... 'Sawdust Caesars hunt in packs,' says magistrate ... 'Clamp down on Mods and Rockers – A Vicious Virus,' say J.P ... 'Town Hits Back on Rat Pack Hooligans', etc (Cohen 2002: 87).

Great Britain had already experienced a mini 'Moral Panic' (the term moral panic was first used by Jock Young in 1971) during the 50s and early 60s over the carriage and use of flick-knives, so the mods and rockers had their 'deviance' defined by an earlier practice (Cohen 2002: xxxv). Hebdige (1993) observed that there was a degree of escapism involved, as the mods and rockers were both over represented by urban youth rebelling against the tedium of urban living, employment opportunities, fringe-poverty and terminal boredom (Hall and Jefferson 1993: 87-96).

All this provided convenient images that could be used as reference points by would-be bikers. Making the conscious choice to become a mod or a rocker was as much a personal fashion statement, as it was the passionate embracing of a particular philosophy. There was a classic line in the Beatles movie, *A Hard Days Night* (1964), when a reporter asked 'Beatle' Ringo Starr (aka Richard Starkey), 'Are you a mod, or a rocker?' Ringo thought for a moment, then replied, 'Um, no. I'm a mocker.' This perhaps sums up the attitude of many who embraced both subcultures – it was as much about mocking authority, and rebelling against their parents, as it was about blindly embracing either sub-culture. Both lifestyles involved 'resistance through rituals,' to borrow from the title of Hall and Jefferson's influential book (Hall and Jefferson 1993). Both subcultures were motorised,

both required adherents to wear immediately identifiable symbols of their affiliation, which placed them in direct opposition to the other, which regularly resulted in ritualised violence, and both involved elements of drug use and sexual freedom. Hebdige (1993) argued, however, that it was really all about 'style' (Hebdige 1979: 17-19, Hall and Jefferson, 1993: 87 - 98).

During periods of heightened moral panic, self-serving and at times dubious spokespersons regularly appear to warn us of perceived threats to public safety (Abercrombie *et al* 2000: 231, Cohen 2002: 3, 39 – 41). These often opportunistic politicians, police officers and other assorted social commentators are often not particularly constrained by the need to have all of the facts at their respective fingertips – in fact, sometimes it is better not to have too much factual information, as it tends to get in the way of a good story – rather, it is often more news worthy to make generalised, dark predictions, which Cohen (2002) refers to it as 'Prophecy of Doom' and 'Spurious Attribution' as these tend to escalate moral panic, which can keep a spokesperson in the front pages for a much longer period than will pedantic, ponderous, carefully-considered, restrained, factual responses (Cohen 2002: 38 – 41). But every Doctor Johnson needs his Boswell; every Holmes his Watson, so prolific social commentators and their media conduits tend to have to establish strategic long-term symbiotic relationships to satisfy each party's personal agenda. I will revisit this theme in Chapter six, with specific reference to the Christchurch Police District Commander of the day, Gideon Tait, and the police operation that resulted in the mass arrest of "bikies" for Unlawful Assembly that occurred at Kerrs Road, Christchurch on 31 December 1973 (Tait 1978: 68-74).

## 7. **Conclusion:**

Whilst rowdy motorcyclists or 'bike-riders' pre-existed Hollister, the 'outlaw biker' was born at Hollister in 1947, confirmed two months later at the first Riverside 'incident,' and reconfirmed over the following summers at places as diverse as Ensenada, New Mexico, Porterville, California and again at Riverside (California). As the 40s entered the early 50s,

‘hoodlum’ bikers started to consolidate into fragmented groups of like-minded motorcycle enthusiasts, with some groups, such as the *Hell’s Angels M.C.* honing their ‘outlaw’ persona. The *Hell’s Angel M.C.* ‘outlaw biker’ template was first transported internationally, when the *Hell’s Angels* granted their first international charter to their Auckland, New Zealand chapter in 1961.

So, by the late 60s, the public of New Zealand were very familiar with ‘motorcycle gangs,’ thanks to both the international media and the domestic coverage of regional ‘bikie’ activities. The early appearance (1961) of the Auckland chapter of the *Hell’s Angels M.C.* provided the regional media with a template of how an international outlaw motorcycle club should look and behave. I will discuss this coverage in greater depth in chapter four, with particular reference to key events in New Zealand in the early 70s that indelibly positioned named ‘bikie’ gangs’ and the ‘outlaw’ motorcycle subculture overall, as a deviant group at the margins of New Zealand society. New Zealand audiences had already had the opportunity to view many of the biker ‘B’ movies produced in the 60s, thanks largely to the ‘midnight movies’ or late-night ‘double-features’ that were particularly popular with New Zealand movie-going youth in the 60s and 70s. Massed bikers were familiar to the New Zealand public, as the result of media coverage of New Year’s Eve celebrations that took place at beach resorts and festivals in both the North and the South Islands at the time, that were subject to intense media analysis, and graphic, albeit colourful reporting.

In the 1970s, the New Zealand police provided ‘Shadow Patrols’ for planned movements of large groups of ‘bikies’ who intended to travel a distance as a group (Tait 1978: 71, Kelsey and Young 1982: 74 – 80). This phenomena, usually reserved in other countries for visiting dignitaries, added a somewhat surreal aspect to the rather exotic cavalcades of highly visible, rag-tag outlaw bikers who invariably treated the public of New Zealand to a number of highly publicised public performances during the movements and at the intended venue, as the media provided the opportunity for the opportunistic bikers to live

up to their reputation, and perform in public. The resultant media images and the public performances provided a forum for main-stream New Zealand youth to vicariously embrace a highly visible, deviant subculture without their running the risk of completely alienating their parents and their community. Therefore, biker 'B' movies, books, motorcycle magazines, etcetera, and the opportunity to view 'bikies' at a safe distance was yet another reassurance to an increasingly restless New Zealand youth that they were not alone in their discontent with their then conservative society, and in their desire to experiment and taste 'freedom.'

But these were not the only social movements in New Zealand at that time – by the end of the 60s, groups such as the *Progressive Youth Movement* ('P.Y.M') and others were taking political action to the streets, and were helping to change the face of New Zealand society (Shadbolt 1971, Yska 1993). Many older member of society watched in horror as all this took place, seeing the New Zealand society that had been defined by two recent World Wars apparently spinning out of control. By the end of 1975, OMC's (or 'gangs') had become very well established internationally, and had defined their generic identity domestically. Outlaw bikers had a high international mass media profile, and were a permanent fixture in most of the New Zealand cities, and a number of the larger towns (and remain so to this day).

In the following two chapters, I will address the mass media and the symbolic construction of a symbolic South Island 'outlaw' biker community. I will start with an outline of 1950s and 60s youth culture and the evolution of OMCs in New Zealand, before I go on to discuss the role that the international media had in this symbolic construction, together with the characteristics of South Island OMCs. I will then go on to specifically address the relationship that South Island OMCs had with the Police, before I specifically analyse the role that Police have in the generation of moral panics.

## Chapter Five

### The Mass Media and the Symbolic Construction of a Generic South Island (New Zealand) ‘Outlaw’ Biker Community

“Major Strasser has been shot. Round up the usual suspects.”

‘Captain Renault’  
*Casablanca* (1942)

#### 1. Introduction:

This chapter will primarily deal with the evolution of ‘outlaw’ motorcycle clubs in the South Island of New Zealand from 1950 – 1975, in the context of the social history of the day. It may assist to establish some facts about New Zealand at this juncture (**Plate 10**). The population of New Zealand in 1950 (not a census year) was 1,927, 629, including Maori (1950, New Zealand Yearbook). It had grown to an estimated 3,127,900, including Maori by 1975 (again, not a census year), and today sits at just over 4.1 million inhabitants (Statistics New Zealand, November, 2006). In 1975 there were an estimated 853, 980 persons in the South Island (1975, New Zealand Year Book). Christchurch (provisionally 359, 900 in March 2006, *sans* visitors) is the largest city in the South Island, and has the appearance of a small English University city (Statistics NZ).

The early European settlers were largely drawn from Great Britain and Ireland, with increasing immigration from the Pacific and Europe (particularly from the Netherlands) post World War II. In more recent times, a new generation of immigrants have migrated to New Zealand from East Asia and elsewhere. It is fair to describe New Zealand today as a melting pot, with the normal social problems experienced in most other developing nations, but with a growing sense of a New Zealand identity. In fact, New Zealand citizens can increasingly select ‘New Zealander’ as an ethnicity choice on official returns, rather than the previous ‘European,’ ‘Maori’ or ‘Pacific Islander’ choices. But this was not the case during the period 1950 to 1975, when the South Island was largely populated by the offspring of the earlier Scots and Irish settlers, who were supplemented by several waves of

post-war immigrants drawn primarily from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. There were small pockets of Southern Maori, a small New Zealand Chinese population who were largely the descendants of Chinese miners from the gold rush days of the 1860s, and other small clusters of immigrants from other countries. But essentially the South Island in the 1950s and 60s was a sparsely populated, largely conservative white enclave, with the majority of the inhabitants living relatively close to the coastline. It is fair to describe the South Island of New Zealand at that time (as many of my participants have) as being conservative, austere, and parochial, and for many, terminally boring. The drinking age was restricted to those over 21 years of age. Bars closed at 6 pm, until the 1967 referendum, and there was no Sunday trading permitted. There was little weekend (or Public Holiday) commercial trading allowed, other than the very restricted trade that the traditionally small, family owned corner dairy was permitted to engage in, within its restricted hours of operation.

The travel writer, Paul Theroux (1997) described New Zealand from a Christchurch perspective as having “a transported culture, ... the most terrible aspect of which was that the New Zealanders themselves did not seem to know what was happening to them in their decline” (Theroux 1992: 9 – 10, cited in Mitchell’s *Flat City Sounds: The Christchurch Music Scene*, 1997: no pagination). He describes how bored he was during his visit here, which stung many New Zealanders at the time, but perhaps would not now, due to the massive social changes that have taken place in this country since the mid 90s (Mitchell 1997: no pagination). This feeling of abject boredom, particularly during weekends and public holidays in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, when most businesses were required by law to close, drove many young New Zealanders to find other outlets for their energy, often to the chagrin of their families, the authorities, and their respective communities. Phil Gifford, writing in the December 2006 edition of *North & South* about the birth of ‘pirate’ radio in New Zealand and the role that the pioneer broadcaster David Gapes had in the initial *Radio Hauraki* ‘pirate’ ship *Tiri* venture, observed, “... on his return from Sydney (sic) Gapes had become quickly unsettled by stupefying aspects of life in New Zealand. The six o’clock



swill (hotel bars closed at 6 pm at that time), the way Sunday closed the country down, the general feeling that there was something dubious about having fun” (Gifford 2006: 51).

It is against this background that I will write largely about the OMCs that have emerged in the southern island of New Zealand (the South Island), which today increasingly promotes a rugged individualist ‘southern man’ persona (currently the subject of a series of very popular *Speights* beer advertisements), which is indicative of how the southern outlaw bikers saw themselves during the 60s and 70s, as they evolved, and how they see themselves today.

## 2. **Youth Culture and the Evolution of OMCs in New Zealand**

OMCs continue to flourish across Australasia today, whilst many other youth sub-cultures have fallen by the wayside. Whilst there are a number of reasons why this has occurred, we must recognise the serendipitous fact that the open-spaces found in New Zealand and Australia make our respective countries bike-rider heaven! Therefore, 1%er ‘outlaw’ bikers in this part of the world have been somewhat buffered by the high visibility of many more vocal, mainstream, recreational bikers who proactively argued for biker rights. So while ‘outlaw’ bikers are considered by mainstream society to be ‘the other,’ they are not so isolated at the margins that they have to live their lives as complete outlaws. Despite their ‘outlaw’ label, most bikers tend to have a civilian life and a club life. The only difference about their ‘deviance’ of choice is that they consciously choose to live their ‘deviant’ lives openly, and with considerable pride that they are at least living part of their lives by their own terms, and not those imposed on them by mainstream society. But their ‘outlaw’ lives makes them feel like they are different from many others in their greater society, in that they choose to live their club lives amongst their ‘brothers’ in accordance with their rigid ‘outlaw’ biker code of loyalty, fraternity and obligation to their club brothers. Veno (2003) quotes an Australian *Hell’s Angel* as saying, “We are modern day heroes, like Ned Kelly...we are the last free people in society” (Veno 2003: opening page).

To understand how these clubs evolved in New Zealand, and to position them today, we perhaps need to review the progression of the various examples of counter-culture that we have experienced in New Zealand since the end of World-War II. The post-war social changes that were experienced in New Zealand were heavily influenced by our increasingly media-driven exposure to prevailing world trends.

Post-war New Zealand society saw the emergence of variations of American and British contemporary (youth) counter-culture, via imported music, magazines, books, and movies of the day. The introduction of television in the sixties saw an explosion of images relayed in real time, which considerably expedited the process. Post-war counter-culture was also greatly assisted by the considerable influx of British and European migrants to New Zealand during the late 1940s, 50s, and early 60s. The 50s saw the emergence of the sharply dressed UK inspired Teddy Boy (and girl), known in this country as either the generic Teddy Boy, or its derivation, the 'Bodgie' (male) and 'Widgie' (female) 'Teddy Boys' tended to emulate the British or American wartime and post-war 'Spiv', and perhaps even the West Coast American Zoot-Suited Hispanic 'Pachuco' of the 1940s (Manning 1958, Yska, 1993). New Zealand had been introduced to American style dancing and music during WWII, as many American servicemen passed through the country during the latter part of the war in the Pacific. The interest in American music remained post-war. Brylcreem and rock n' roll were potent symbols of youth rebellion.

These 'Teddy Boys', 'Bodgies' and 'Widgies' shocked their parents, and scandalised their conservative New Zealand communities with their exaggerated language, dress and hairstyles. This public outrage quickly evolved into a full-blown moral panic in conservative New Zealand society that saw the prevailing youth culture as a blatant example of the moral turpitude that was supposedly threatening to overwhelm the country. This outrage ultimately led to the New Zealand Government ordering an official inquiry into moral delinquency in 1954 ('The Special Committee on Moral Delinquency in Children and Young People'). In November 1954, three hundred thousand copies of the

committee report were subsequently delivered to every New Zealand family that received a Child Benefit Allowance (Yska 1993: 68-82).

Laws were subsequently introduced in an attempt to suppress “American-influenced teenage subculture” (Yska 1993: 68–70). This ‘Special Committee’ had met during an increasing climate of moral panic, which had been fuelled by the June, 1954 Parker-Hulme murder in Christchurch.<sup>1</sup> Moral delinquency was now a major, national issue. This sense of moral panic was exacerbated in the spring of 1955, with the highly publicised trial of nineteen-year-old Auckland ‘Bodgie,’ Paddy Black, who was ultimately convicted of the flick-knife slaying of a rival in a Queen Street, Auckland Café, and sentenced to death (Yska 1993: 9–11). New Zealand was transfixed with newspaper images of ‘Bodgies’ and ‘Widgies’ parading in and out of the Auckland Supreme Court throughout the trial.

Perhaps the foil for the New Zealand version of the Teddy boy was the ‘milk-bar cowboy,’ many of who rode motorcycles. Arguably, the ‘milk-bar cowboy’ was the forerunner of the New Zealand ‘outlaw’ biker we see today (Dennehy and Newbold 2001: 161–2, Dick 2004). The late 50s/early 60s saw the emergence of the relatively short-lived ‘Beat Generation’ in New Zealand that was largely responsible for the establishment of the coffee-bar in big-city New Zealand. Jazz Clubs sprung up, and the dreaded marijuana ‘reefer’ made its (illicit) appearance (Newbold 2000: 168). The ‘milk-bar cowboy’ remained relatively unchanged. The next major ‘evolutionary’ step was the emergence of the New Zealand version of the British inspired ‘mods’ and ‘rockers’ (with the ‘rocker’ clones continuing the biker tradition). Many of the 50s and 60s ‘milk-bar cowboys’ updated their wardrobe and hairstyles to embrace the greasy, leather clad ‘rocker’ image. The late 60s saw the appearance of the New Zealand ‘hippy’, and the refining of the Americanised ‘biker’ culture. The late 60s/early 70s also saw the emergence of ‘punks’ and ‘skinheads.’

Whilst there were groups of bike riders who could be considered ‘gangs’ established in several New Zealand towns and cities in the 1950s, they have ‘officially’ existed in New

Zealand since 1 July 1961, when the Auckland chapter of the *Hells Angels M.C.* was established (Dennehy and Newbold 2001: 161, 165; Veno 2003: 30-1, 144). This was the first time that an American motorcycle club had exported its ideology to another country, so this was somewhat of a ‘milestone event’ for New Zealand OMCs, regardless of their affiliation, as it resulted in New Zealand being recognised internationally as having a long outlaw biker tradition. Veno (2003), claims the first ‘1%er’ biker club in Australia, the *Gladiators M.C.*, was formed in 1963, two years after the Auckland *Hell’s Angels M.C.* was incorporated (Veno 2003: 30). The early appearance of a chapter of the *Hell’s Angels M.C.* in New Zealand provided later New Zealand ‘outlaw’ bikers with a domestic representation of how an outlaw biker should look and act, although one of my participants who was involved with a Christchurch OMC from 1973 observed, “... I never actually saw an Angel (a New Zealand *Hell’s Angel*) until 1985.”

OMCs have existed in various forms in the South Island since the early 1960s, with names like the *Southland Saints* and the *Southland Road Runners*, as well as ad hoc groups of motorcycle enthusiasts, such as Christchurch’s *FN99* (“Fuckin’ near a 100”), *Drifters*, *Apostles*, *Heaven’s Outcast*, and Timaru’s *Highwaymen*, et al. Interestingly, ‘outlaw bikers’ and ‘rockers’ seem to have co-existed for a period in New Zealand in the 1960s. Some reportedly wore back-patches, whilst others were side-patched, meaning they wore a patch on the upper sleeve of their jackets. Andrew Schmidt (1995) wrote a retrospective article for a music magazine about a homicide that occurred in Christchurch on 28 December 1966. The incident involved a clash between ‘mods and rockers’ (or “sharpies”), and culminated in a ‘mod’ shooting ‘rocker’ Les ‘Lightening’ Thomas through a closed door during a confrontation at an address in Halswell Road (Schmidt 1995: 34). It is interesting to note that Schmidt records that the deceased Thomas was wearing a leather jacket that day which allegedly bore “... a *Devil’s Disciples* patch” on the back, which would be later presented in court (Schmidt 1995: 35). It would appear that this ‘patch’ was an individual or informal ‘rocker’ adornment, and perhaps not representative of any OMC of the day, although a participant has some recollection of hearing of others wearing some

sort of 'Devil's Disciples' back patch or side patch in Christchurch in the late 60s (Schmidt 1995: 34–5). One of my participants remembers youths painting the word 'Christchurch' in the form of a bottom 'rocker' across the lower section of the back panels of their leather jackets in the 60s. This participant recalls travelling to Cathedral Square as a teenager to watch members of the *Epitaph Riders M.C.* congregate there on Friday nights in the very early 70s. He later became a patched member of a South Island OMC in the mid 70s, and has remained associated with clubs to this day, although he is no longer an active member.

Motorcycle clubs had evolved in New Zealand by the late 60s to a point where bikers were a reasonably common sight in most cities and in many larger towns across both the North and the South Island. In August of 1969, the foundation chapter of the *Epitaph Riders M.C.* was incorporated in Christchurch, and immediately made its presence felt. Allied clubs from other parts of New Zealand passed through Christchurch during that period, often stopping over to party with the *Epitaph Riders* and their supporters. When I commenced my operational police career at the South Island port of Timaru in August of 1969, the local OMC, the then *Highwaymen M.C.* was already well established. Whilst 'outlaw' clubs have come and gone over the past 30 – 40 years, current clubs with links to earlier clubs continue to flourish across the South Island, from Nelson and Blenheim in the north, to Christchurch, Greymouth, and Timaru mid-island, to the clubs in Dunedin, Invercargill in the south, and a club on the remote Chatham Islands (**Plate 10**). Some of those who feature in this research project have links with biker clubs that extend as far back as the latter part of the 1960s.

In New Zealand during the late 1960s, the occasional 'bikie' skirmish tended to be viewed as a somewhat exotic event, and was often considered to be the actions of a group of boisterous deviant youth, more so than a threat to public safety. This early relatively ambivalent attitude started to change from the early 70s, when politicians started to talk up the possibility of anti-gang legislation to 'curb the gangs' (Tait 1978: 68). Such incidents

often resulted in colourful newspaper and television news reports. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 1970, the *Timaru Herald* newspaper reported the aftermath of the major build up of bikers drawn from 'outlaw' clubs from throughout New Zealand who had travelled to attend the New Years Eve celebrations at Caroline Bay that year. Their numbers were reportedly swelled by a small number of local bikers. The newspaper records that there were eighteen arrests that evening, including some locals. The then Officer-in-Charge of the Timaru police district, Chief Inspector Brian Gibson, was quoted (two days later) as saying, "I was quite disappointed to realise we had such types here." The reporter appears to have been fascinated by a hefty biker known as 'The Bull,' who theatrically wore a hefty ring through his nose, complete with a short dangling length of chain (*Timaru Herald*, 2 January 1970). During the early – mid 1970s, South Island clubs also regularly travelled to the North Island to meet and party with affiliate clubs, and sometimes skirmish with rivals (*Canta* 1972: 8-9, Tait, 1978: 68–80).

Outlaw bikers are really not any different in that respect than many other sections of society when it comes to drunken individuals performing in public. The main-stream mass media apparatus that existed in New Zealand by the 1960s/early 70s, obviously struggled to deal with sub-cultures like the 'bikies,' as many of their media reports tend to read like they had been written by some foreign correspondent, struggling to describe the customs of a completely foreign people in some far-flung land – "Bikie Threat Fails to Materialise" (*Timaru Herald*, January 3, 1972: 6), "Motor Cycle Gang Causes Havoc" (*Timaru Herald*, January 3, 1972, "No Disruption as Police Beat Bikies" (*Timaru Herald*, December 30, 1972). The "Motor Cycle Gang Causes Havoc" article contains a lurid account of alleged bad (albeit mild) behaviour by members of the Palmerston North (North Island) *Mothers M.C.* during a refreshment stop at Cheviot (a small town, "70 miles north of Christchurch"), during their return trip to Picton to catch Inter-Island Ferry (*Timaru Herald*, January 3, 1972: 6). The articles are rather quaint and stilted when one reads them today, but they are indicative of the way in which the New Zealand media often represented 'bikies' during this period in the early to mid 70s.

My participants confirm that the largely ethnic *Stormtroopers* had a presence in Christchurch in the early 70s, and had an easy relationship with the *Epitaph Riders*, which was unusual, given that the *Stormtroopers* were largely interlopers from the North Island, and a number were Maori. In 1973, the tension was ratcheted up considerably when the Christchurch chapter of the *Devils Henchmen M.C.* was established. One participant recounted a story to me about a former club mate telling him about seeing (as an impressionable 16 year old) one of the founder *Henchmen* proudly wearing the *Henchmen's* original patch (now referred to as the 'Persil Patch' because of its similarity to the soap powder advertisement), affixed to the back of one of the biker's cut-off denim vest with safety pins! The appearance of another patch on their turf was a major affront to the *Epitaph Riders* who had become used to being the dominant club in the city, which resulted in them becoming more and more resistant to other non-aligned 'patches' in 'their' area. Their increasingly aggressive stance towards others would ultimately put them in conflict with other non-aligned Southern bike clubs from outside of Christchurch, particularly the Timaru *Highwaymen M.C.* Two major pivotal events that arguably hardened the resolve of the police to 'beat the bikies' were the mass arrest of bikers for unlawful assembly at Kerrs Road, Christchurch in December 1973, and the internecine gang warfare that broke out between the *Epitaph Riders M.C.* and the Christchurch chapter of the *Devil's Henchmen M.C.* in 1974/75. This is discussed later in Chapter 6 (Tait 1978: 68-80; Twentyman 1975: 1-99).

By the end of 1975, outlaw clubs were firmly established in all of the cities, and also in several large towns across both the North and South Islands of New Zealand. The generic New Zealand 'outlaw' biker model was well established, and readily identifiable to the greater community, thanks to the increasingly high profile of the bikers, and the attention paid to them by the mass media. Members were starting to become more heavily involved in drug use, and some in drug dealing, but many still maintained a foothold in the greater community through employment, sport and socialisation. My participants tell me that

there was very limited drug dealing by southern club members at the time, as most of the clubs had a steady 'black' income from illegal bars that they ran at the time to cash in on '10 o'clock closing,' and most club members were more inclined to alcohol rather than drug use at that time, although that was to change for some as they become more involved in the drug scene.<sup>2</sup> An example of 'sly-grogging by the clubs is recorded in an undated cutting from a participant's scrapbook that he believes relates to a court case in late 1976, when the secretary-treasurer of the *Devil's Henchmen M.C.* Christchurch chapter was charged with illegally selling liquor from a bar at their then Armagh Street Headquarters. The newspaper cutting records that the police calculated that the club was illegally disposing of approximately \$700 worth of liquor per month at the time (*The Press*, circa 1976: no specific date).

The OMC lifestyle is often depicted in the mass media as being a particularly violent subculture. Clubs are vulnerable in their early stages, and often experience periods of internecine warfare with other bike clubs and sometimes with local ethnic gangs in the first few years after their establishment (Lavigne 1999: 199 – 200, 254, Veno 2003: 40-1). These clashes usually relate to battles over 'turf,' and are often very violent. These early clashes sometimes lead to the development of long standing grievances between clubs. But periods of warfare also bond the members of clubs, and sometimes rid clubs of their more extreme members through death or imprisonment. Lavigne (1987) argues that (internecine) gang warfare:

...also toughens up the clubs and forces them to refine their operations. The benefits carry over to all club business. Strong intelligence and security networks set up during the war foil police attempts to stop drug and prostitution operations ... (Lavigne 1987: 301).

Experience gives members of outlaw clubs an interesting perspective when discussing community violence. Several of my participants personally experienced the violent Christchurch biker wars of 1974 – 75. Some were injured, some went to jail, some later drifted away from the scene, but all remain bonded to their club mates to this day by their collective experience, and they routinely memorialise deceased club mates in the 'In



Memoriam' section of their local newspapers on the anniversary of their premature deaths. I would argue that the bonds that I have observed between returned servicemen are comparable to the lifelong bonds that exist between these 'experienced' outlaw bikers who survived these 'biker wars.' This common 'operational' experience is perhaps the reason why some of the outlaw bikers that I have spoken to at times grudgingly identify with police officers, particularly detectives and operational uniformed police officers, (and vice versa). Bikers, in my experience, are more likely to be dealt with as individuals by experienced police officers, than are street gang members, particularly those from gangs that police officers collectively see in a more negative light (such as the *Mongrel Mob*, particularly by officers who have worked in the North Island). Whilst it could be argued that this demonstrates elements of racism, much of the prejudice (from both Maori and Pakeha police officers) is based on experience and is drawn from a collective memory.

### 3. **International Media and South Island OMCs**

Because of New Zealand's geographical remoteness, booksellers have routinely imported books, overseas newspapers and magazines from around the world since colonial times. There is also a robust, long-standing domestic publishing industry. Today, New Zealand is probably far better served by television providers (including satellite TV), than many other developed countries. So whilst New Zealand is geographically isolated, it has never been completely cut off from sources of information about what was happening in the rest of the (western) world. Most New Zealanders take an active interest in what is happening internationally, regionally and nationally. This media awareness on the part of South Island bikers, in addition to the familiarity with the international media dealing with OMCs, and related topics, has a direct impact on the matters I will discuss in the following pages, as all have a direct bearing on how the foundation New Zealand outlaw bikers were represented in the national and regional mass media, and how they reacted to these representations.

Veno (2003), writing from an Australian perspective, argues that the 1954 film, *The Wild One*, had ‘an enormous social impact, both domestically (United States) and internationally’ (Veno 2003: 29-30). This film was banned in New Zealand in 1954, and was not publicly exhibited here until 1977 (Yska 1993: 111–14). Nevertheless, the image of Marlon Brando’s character ‘Johnny’ was very familiar to New Zealand bikers before most of them ever got to see the movie. Despite this, Veno (2003), presumably not aware of its banning in New Zealand, argues:

... The attitude, the clothes, the disrespect for society, the power of the rebels and the way they treated their women. Almost instantly motorcycle clubs in England, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Germany, Denmark and Italy were mimicking the dress and swagger of the characters in the film ... (Veno 2003: 29).

Negative publicity, or the demonising of sub-sections of society by authority figures, particularly law enforcement, makes these sub-cultures hugely attractive to those with an inclination to rebel. The very fact that the movie was banned probably attracted young men to the ‘outlaw’ biker sub-culture. Similarly, ‘bad’ publicity for OMCs was ‘good’ publicity in terms of ensuring their continuity. Veno (2003), discussing some unsavoury incidents involving the *Gypsy Jokers M.C.* (an Australian OMC), claims that “... the bad boy publicity generated by the incidents would actually attract new members to the Gypsy Jokers, assuring the long-term survival of the club” (Veno 2003: 15).

Several of the ‘biker’ books discussed in Chapter two (eg. Thompson 1966: 54), mentioned real and mythical outlaw biker ‘initiation’ practices that perhaps set a template for international bikers of the day, and which were adopted in New Zealand. My principal participant, a voracious reader and movie buff, can name and discuss in detail many obscure books and films dating from the 1950s that have dealt with outlaw biker themes. He confirms that specific biker books and films did provide the inspiration for some initiation practices, and other outlaw biker practices in this country, as the earlier generation of New Zealand outlaw bikers sought to synthesise a generic New Zealand outlaw biker identity from the myriad of available international biker images of the day. In fact, those of my participants who were patched report that they were not subjected to

initiations (“... we didn’t have that shit back then ...”), or were subjected to *ad hoc* initiations that were more like horse-play than a serious ritualised event. Veno (2003) observes that, “... all outlaw clubs have an initiation rite or ceremony. It’s the degree of extremes and the form of rites that are hotly debated (Veno 2003: 57). He goes on to observe that most of the myths perpetuated about alleged biker rituals originate from law enforcement spokespersons and other ‘outsiders,’ who have a tendency to accept as gospel stories for spurious sources (Veno 2003: 57). I will discuss the police myth making further in Chapter six. All of the bikers from the period that I discussed the film *Easyrider* with agreed that this film established the physical characteristics of the ‘chopper’ and ‘bobber’ motorcycles, featured in the film. The bikers were already well familiar with these types of machines from their reading of American ‘Biker Lifestyle Magazines’ such as *Choppers* (1967 – 69), *Colours* (1970 – 1), *Street Choppers* (1969 -), and the hugely influential (not to be confused with the film of a similar name) *Easyriders* (1971 -) magazine (Osgerby 2005: 92 – 3). There were to be similar regional publications, including *OZBIKE* (1977 -), and the now defunct New Zealand publication, *Screaming Eagle*, which first appeared on the scene around 1991 or thereabouts. Bikers from all clubs of the day report that they tended to read the same books and magazines, and that they sometimes used them as a reference point (as did law enforcement officers, writers, the media, and the general public), but they were not their only reference point by any means.

One example of the use of a book to provide inspiration is the naming of the Christchurch founder chapter of the *Devil’s Henchmen M.C.*, which one of the very early members argues was taken directly from a list of American outlaw clubs that was recorded on page six of Jan Hudson’s (1967) *Sex and Savagery of Hell’s Angels: The Full Story of Americas’ Motorcycle ‘Wild Ones.’* Another ex-member confirms this recollection, although these recollections are slightly in conflict with another personal written history that I have reviewed, written by another early club member, where it is claimed that the name was taken from an *Easyrider* magazine (Ferris 1985, Ch. 6: 8 ). Another participant advises me that the first chapter of the *Road Knights M.C.* (Timaru, circa 1973) was named after a

careful analysis of relevant sections of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*. It is interesting to note that my edition of this dictionary records that a 'Knight of the Road' is a 'Highwayman,' given that some of the founder members of the Timaru chapter of the *Road Knights M.C.* were formerly members of the now defunct *Highwaymen M.C.* (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990: 654). But the early clubs that were established in the South Island of New Zealand were already aware of motorcycle 'gangs' in the North Island, and in other parts of the world, so whilst they may have borrowed from what they saw and heard in shaping some of their practices, other practices that evolved were as much a matter of logical progression, as they would be with any other new organization that aligns itself to a global image.

Outlaw bikers astutely use their chosen symbols to create their OMC community. Cohen (1985) argued that 'community' seems to imply simultaneously both similarity and difference. He argued:

... the word thus expresses a relational idea: the opposition of one community to others or to other social entities ... the use of the word is only occasioned by the desire or need to express such a distinction. It seems appropriate, therefore, to focus our examination of the nature of community on the element which embodies the sense of discrimination, namely the boundary ... (Cohen 1985: 12).

As illustrated below, the various forms of media, however, apart from supplying boundary-marking symbols, came themselves to act as symbols in the ways in which they were used, passed around, discussed, and evaluated by South Island bikers. One of my participants recalls taking some biker orientated magazines and books to some of his club mates while they were incarcerated in Christchurch's Addington Prison for a lengthy remand period during the 74/75 Christchurch biker wars. He said that one of the warders took exception to his choice of literature, asking him, "What do you want to read this 'tommy-rot' for?" Like most young men of his age, he tended to see such comment as a challenge to his choice of lifestyle. This participant observed that many young men of his age also read comics regularly, a practice that he recalls particularly annoyed some adults who considered them to be unhealthy reading material for young, impressionable minds.

Springhall (1998) discusses the horror comic panics in the United States and the United Kingdom in the 40s and 50s, arguing that it was essentially a “fear of mass culture” (Springhall 1998: 121-146). Yska (1993: 10) notes that Mickey Spillane novels were banned in New Zealand in the 1950s (Springhall 1993: 10).

My participants clearly confirmed for me that negative media coverage of their sub-culture only tended to reinforce their sense of biker community, and to instil feelings of resistance, rather than ever deter them from their conscious lifestyle choice. In fact it is obvious when talking to ‘outlaw’ bikers that ill-considered and ill-informed public comment invariably reinforces their widely held belief that many critics who are particularly vocal about their subculture have little real understanding about what the lifestyle is all about, and what it actually means to the adherents. Ill-informed, generalist comment only tends to confirm their suspicions that only people in touch with the subculture, or who have directly experienced it in some way really understand that it is not about deviance and anarchy, but is (or was in those days at least), about friendship, camaraderie, good-times and a passion for motorcycles. Interestingly, one of my participants observed that today’s notion of biker ‘brotherhood’ was rarely discussed or even recognised in his early days in the scene (late 60s/early 70s) – he argues that he and others become involved primarily due to peer pressure. Another said his personal motivation in joining (and subsequently remaining) with his club, was primarily centred on feelings of “excitement, camaraderie and friendship.” It can be argued that in the early days, the concept of ‘biker brotherhood’ was largely a media construction, but that today, the concept of outlaw biker brotherhood goes largely unchallenged as the often-stated central tenet of the OMC sub-culture. But many of my older biker participants with memories of the 60s, 70s and the 80s, (like many old cops), often wistfully observe that many of the younger, newer members have lost sight of what the ‘outlaw’ club life is all about (motorcycles, friendship, loyalty and good times), and that many members of today’s clubs are often more interested in making money and other selfish pursuits, than pursuing the old purist outlaw biker ethos.

The participant who told me about his prison-visit experience has carefully preserved many of his biker books and magazines from the period. He has shown me a number of examples from his collection of *Easyrider* magazines that contain illustrated articles about American OMCs, although the emphasis in these types of magazines was more on motorcycles and the motorcycle culture, than on promoting the ‘outlaw’ biker subculture *per se*. This individual had to import these magazines directly from the United States for a period, when New Zealand suddenly decided to ban their sale for some inexplicable reason for a period in the early 80s. I recall purchasing my own first copy of Hunter Thompson’s *Hell’s Angels* as soon as it was released in New Zealand, and well remember reading and re-reading the book throughout the remainder of the 60s and early 70s. In fact I have worn-out, misplaced or loaned (never to be returned) several copies of the book during my adult life, and can still recall large sections of the text from memory. A few of my participants obviously had a similar connection with this particular book, whilst others have not bothered to read it, did not particularly connect with it, or refused to read it (primarily because Sonny Barger now considers that Thompson exploited the Angels for personal gain, or they considered Thompson was a wimp for not persevering with the Angels after his beating).

One of my participants in particular has an impressive collection of biker books, magazines and related material from the period. He was probably the most avid reader of the ‘pulp’ books of the day that I encountered, having worked his way through the majority of the aforementioned *New English Library* ‘biker’ series. He accurately remembers the titles of the books of the day, and vividly recalls the lurid images on the covers of English biker novels of the period, particularly the aforementioned image of the German helmeted biker on the cover of the original paperback edition of Peter Cave’s (1971) *Chopper: England’s King of the Angels*. He says that he read these novels for what they were – ‘escapist’ biker tales, contained in novels with lurid, evocative covers. In fact, most of the English book covers of novels that referenced any aspect of deviant or profane rocker or ‘outlaw’ motorcycle youth culture throughout the 60s and early 70s, invariably carried the

publisher's lurid impressions of the deviant (English) 'outlaw biker' of the day (**Plate 8**). Interestingly, the (1973) *Paladin* paperback edition of Stanley Cohen's (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* carried a very similar image of a heavily decorated English biker (**Plate 11**). It is interesting to note that several of the biker series that I have found in second-hand book shops (and in my participants' collections), were sold in New Zealand with an 'Adults Only' sticker affixed to them by the New Zealand distributors). I can only assume that it was the biker theme, not the contents, that required this age restriction.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the geographical isolation of New Zealand during the period (1950 – 1975), and the time it took for overseas books, magazines and other items relating to youth or popular culture to arrive to our shores, exotic books and magazines were treasures to be carefully preserved, treasures to be sometimes shared with like-minded friends and associates. There were difficulties involved in directly importing items from 'overseas,' initially due to austerity measures and rigid import regulations in the late 40s/early 50s. Therefore, books, magazines and vinyl (music) records were often 'swapped,' or loaned to friends, or exchanged for other goods in a 'green-economy' form of barter and exchange. One could argue, therefore, that a community of like-minded people was actively constructed through such exchanges. But such exchanges were not only of symbolic significance. One of my participants observed that he first started to seriously read motorcycle magazines when he bought his first motorcycle, because this was a time when bikers needed to know how to repair or renovate their own motorcycles (as most were working men with restricted budgets). Motorcycle magazines and manuals were therefore a very sought after commodity. The magazines also provided a window to the outside world in a somewhat grey, conservative, mono-cultural, 1950s/early 60s New Zealand. My participants noted that many magazines were read at that time from collections of sometimes dated magazines that were recycled to 'public areas,' such as workplace lunchrooms, men's hairdressers, women's hair-dressing, salons, doctors and dentist's surgeries, and hospital waiting rooms.

Much of the literature available to New Zealand bikers did, however, provide images and ideas that helped them to construct their community. My New Zealand biker-book collecting participant purchased a copy of the (1971) *New English Library* pictorial magazine, *The First Pictorial Guide to the Motorcycle Outlaws of the Seventies*, and a subsequent *New English Library* UK 'Hell's Angels' magazine whilst at high school, and said that he read and re-read them until they finally fell to pieces several years later. He recently happened upon a copy under the counter in a motorcycle parts shop, and managed to persuade the owner to allow him to borrow it for a period so that he could bring it to me to show me what he had been talking about.

Several of my participants have told me that there were a number of 'outlaw' biker related articles that appeared in the Australian *People* and the widely read (now defunct) *Australasian Post* magazines that could be found in many New Zealand homes, doctor's surgeries and the like in the 60s and 70s. I have since located two examples from 1970. The cover of one, dated May 28 1970, has 'Post Report: Hell's Angels – Savage Brotherhood' prominently displayed, whilst the other from August 17, 1970 has 'Post Report part two – The Real Hell's Angels' again prominently displayed on the cover. Both 'Special Reports' relate to lurid accounts of the alleged activities of the Californian *Hell's Angels*, and appear to be very similar to those contained in the 1965 'The Lynch Report.' I was socialising recently with three former outlaw bikers from the period after a rock concert when Hunter Thompson's *Hell's Angels* came up. I made some comment about an amusing anecdote of Thompson's relating to a rather colourful, albeit dysfunctional Angel, 'Terry the Tramp.' One of the men present laughed and said that "Terry" ('the Tramp') had been his style role model at the time. When I subsequently asked him where he had first seen a photographic image of 'Terry the Tramp' (as Thompson (1966) does not contain and photographic plates), he immediately responded with "... I can tell you exactly where I first saw it ... It was in an article about the Californian Angels that was in the *Australian Post* (sic) in 1970 ... Terry the Tramp and Sonny Barger were in a picture ...". He went on to say that he had retained the article, but had since misplaced it, and had



not been able to locate another copy to date. This would have to be one of the two *Australasian Post* magazines mentioned above. Another participant recalls a specific article that appeared in the *Australasian Post* in the early to mid 70s about a biker funeral. He recalls that it was titled 'Farewell to Bimbo,' and was published in the early to mid 1970s. He also recalls regional articles about outlaw bikers, including a New Zealand *Listener* article written by Rosemary McLeod about the *Highway 61 M.C.* convention in Jan 1976 (he recalls McLeod commenting in the article that the Auckland *Highway 61* members had to leave prematurely to travel back to Auckland due to the Haora murder), and distinctly remembers two major national television broadcasters of the day, Brian Edwards and David Excell, conducting major studio interviews of members of a number of primarily northern outlaw clubs within a few days of each other in late 1975/early 1976. He recalls a considerable number of other 'outlaw' biker related documentaries, news items, and Australasian articles about the subculture from the late 1960s, and has an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of events relating to all New Zealand outlaw clubs (and many overseas clubs) from that time to the present day, even though he is no longer actively involved in the club scene (but maintains regular contact with his old associates).

There were many British and North American magazines of this period that periodically featured items or photographs of 'outlaw motorcycle gangs,' invariably portraying them as 'the motorcycle menace,' 'Barbarians,' etcetera. I have been able to view a considerable number of these back copies that were still carefully archived in my participant's personal collections of biker memorabilia. Some New Zealand outlaw bikers sought out biker related material, whilst others were shown items by others when there was something of interest written about the sub-culture, whilst some were just indifferent. Most routinely read motorcycle magazines, more so than any other publications that dealt with popular culture. The hugely popular monthly *Rolling Stone* magazine for instance, was primarily read by those with an interest in contemporary music and youth culture, so it tended to be these individuals who would encounter biker related items in these publications, and then circulate around other club members.

From personal experience, and from the accounts of my participants, magazines in those days were devoured by youth starved for cultural material, and were often shared around amongst like-minded friends, as happens today. I experienced this reciprocity myself throughout my lengthy research period. Two of my participants in particular (once they knew what I was particularly interested in), would regularly send or bring me items of interest. Many of those who were interested in the mass media representations of their subculture in the 60s and 70s have remained interested as they have grown older, and are the ones that have tended to keep abreast with the more contemporary literature. I was surprised at the number of bikers that I have spoken to who have read anthropological and sociological books and articles about the subculture. For example, a number had read (or at least knew of) Canadian anthropologist Daniel Wolf's (1991) book, *The Rebels: A Brotherhood of Outlaw Bikers*, which dealt with a Canadian 'outlaw' motorcycle club.

There were some local items produced that dealt with the local 'outlaw' biker culture during the relevant period. One example is a book, *Fragments 2*, published in Christchurch around 1970 (Young 1970). The book contains biker photographs, narrative and poetry that espouse a 'tribal' biker ethos. The identity of the editors of this collection is not particularly clearly recorded, but my participant believes that they were teachers from the then *Hagley High School* (now Community College). Another of my participants told me that he had devoured 10 years worth of *Life* magazines whilst working in a remote location in the early 70s, so belatedly got to read some 'Hell's Angels' articles that appeared in *Life* during that period. This participant clearly remembers reading a number of other outlaw-biker-related articles in the 1960s/70s, but did not see the need to retain them, and does not believe that he was influenced by anything that he read about the sub-culture. But this same individual can recall in considerable detail articles about motorcycles from a range of motorcycle magazines from the same period, which is indicative of his life-long passion for motorcycles.

By the mid 1960s, OMC symbols were well known around the world, thanks in the main to the rapid transmission of such sub-cultural images via the increasingly globalised mass media. The outward form of symbols includes symbolic behaviour or action, whilst substance relates to the meaning of the symbol in a particular context or situation (Cohen 1985: 14 - 21). Cohen (1985) argued that symbols:

... do more than merely stand for or represent something else ... they also allow those who employ them to supply part of their meaning ... but their meanings are not shared in the same way ... each is mediated by the idiosyncratic experience of the individual ... (Cohen 1985: 14).

My participants did not report that any particular book or film has been particularly influential in exporting the *Hell's Angel's* ideology and practices to outlaw clubs evolving in South Island of New Zealand, as the *Hell's Angels M.C.* already had a physical presence in Auckland from 1961, although the founder members had been riding together from at least 1960. They advise that whilst the more well known books were read at the time, and widely discussed, the evolution of clubs tended to be influenced by more grounded issues. These influences include environmental issues, such as the ability to secure and maintain a building to use as a clubhouse, which was often dictated by the number of active members at any given time, financial and human resources, their periodic contestation with other clubs, and the regular pressure from the authorities, etcetera. What they did consider significant about these books was the way in which they were written. Thompson and Reynolds/McClure wrote their books in a style that struck a cord with the youthful reader – Thompson already had considerable credibility as a wild living, drug and alcohol abusing journalist with a profound understanding of youth culture, whilst Michael McClure (with the former *Hell's Angel* Reynolds as his narrator) was an already acknowledged outstanding 'new age' poet and playwright with a writing style that they could identify with. McClure, like Thompson, has gone on to become a significant force in American writing, and is considered to have been one of the more influential writers of his generation.

Outlaw bikers from the period did engage with the international mass media, which helped facilitate the communication and dissemination of global images relevant to OMCs. These international mass media images enabled South Island OMCs to develop the practices (such as initiation) that established a symbolic connection with the international OMC community.<sup>4</sup> These various forms of media were consumed, collected, collated and disseminated by bikers, which helped to constitute the latter as a distinctive group, with particular interests. In this sense, a community of like-minded people was established through the use of the media. This enabled bikers to keep up to date with overseas trends in motorcycles, clothing, music, OMC insignia, and other aspects of biker 'style,' as well as informing bikers of the public view of what OMCs were all about. But these images were multi-vocal, as they also provided entertainment pure and simple, as well as providing practical information that facilitated the biker lifestyle (e.g. motorcycle repairs, modifications, etc). One of my participants said that he finds it "... a little unhealthy today to see younger people playing with their *X-Boxes* and watching TV all the time," instead of reading, as he did in the 60s/70s. He said that he distinctly recalls the socialisation that was involved in the sharing of magazines and books, which he saw as essential to his social relationship with like-minded people (bikers).

When I reviewed the various biker movies of the period with one of my active biker participants, he surprised me by naming the Marianne Faithfull 'art-house' film, *Girl on a Motorcycle* (1968), as being an influential 'bike' film (largely because of the way that motorcycles were referenced in the film). When I asked him why he liked the film, he said that it had nothing to do with clubs, and that there was little or no violence in the film, but he liked it because he thought it was 'a great film with great (continental) scenery in it' and that it reflected "the core values of motorcycling."<sup>5</sup> Wooley and Price (2005: 50) in writing about this film, observed, "... and yet, the cycle and its gorgeous rider achieve a wordless eloquence that says more about freedom and rebellion than any volume of ranting from *The Wild Angels* or *Easy Rider*." My participant also nominated *Quadrophenia* (1979) as being a significant 'biker' movie because of the accurate depiction of mid 60s

youth culture and the emphasis placed on the importance on style, with particular reference to the contrasting styles - the 'greasy' Rockers' biker garb and powerful motorcycles, against the Mod's exaggerated hair styles, extravagant dress code, and their stylish Italian motor scooters.

As I progressively interviewed my participants, it became patently obvious that some individuals were more likely to be influenced by articles about their chosen sub-culture than others, and not all biker related articles are of interest to the collective group. What is perhaps more influential collectively is their response to contemporary debate about outlaw biker activities that are played out in the mass media, particularly items about incidents that they or their fellow club members have been involved in. However, the impact of the representations of 'outlaw' bikers in international and regional publications should not be under-estimated. My participants can still remember some of the articles and images that they were exposed to in the mass media decades ago as clearly as if it were yesterday. Contemporary newspaper stories and documentaries provoke far more of a reflective response than general articles about the sub-culture. Topical news items, read or broadcast, invariably precipitates a timely, albeit informal 'heads-up' to others, so that they too can monitor developments. I have received many such 'heads-up' calls myself over a past two-three years, as I have developed a relationship with bikers and other researchers. These are the same sort of responses that I experienced whilst growing up in small towns and in rural communities. They are a normal community response to news. Outlaw bikers and their fellow travellers feel part of a community, so immediately react by telling others when they witness, hear of, or read about biker related events.

Outlaw bikers tend to react to generalist comments about their sub-culture that are made in the mass-media by academics, law enforcement officers and social commentators more so than comments made by general members of the public. This is primarily because the aforementioned 'experts' claim to have some insight into the culture, whilst members of the public tend to express more generalised, often ethereal reactive concerns about issues

that invariably relate to their fear of crime (real or perceived), their personal safety, and the safety of their extended family, noise, the perceived impact on property values, and the visibility of gang members in their community. This differentiation is probably because crime victims are a thing of the past, whereas social commentators have the ability to precipitate a reaction that may ultimately impact upon the club and personal freedoms.

#### 4. **Characteristics of South Island OMCs**

I will use OMC characteristics to discuss how South Island OMCs conformed and differed from other outlaw clubs, domestically and internationally. In many ways, due partly to the influence of the international media, OMCs in the South Island of New Zealand are yet another example of a local expression of a global phenomenon. Global images and ideas were important locally, but as I have tried to demonstrate, this does not mean that South Island OMCs were exactly the same as OMCs in the USA or the UK. Certainly, South Island OMCs have adopted a very similar template to outlaw bikers anywhere. Their club 'Colours' follow a similar construction, as does the imagery and symbolism contained within these patches. There is a preponderance of imagery that superficially links the wearer to earlier ideas involving chivalry (Knights), the Satanic (Devils), death (Epitaph) and location (44 South). These colours, and other 'outlaw' biker accrements are worn for a specific purpose.

Bowie (2000: 38) notes that Weber described human beings as 'meaning makers,' and argues that it is fundamental to all human societies to impose meaning on their respective environment. She goes on to discuss the term 'symbolic classification,' which refers to 'this attempt to create worlds and webs of meaning,' and notes that language, age, sex, ethnic and cultural features are just some of the classificatory tools that are used as markers in the classificatory process. The body is a symbol and we use it as an instrument 'that mediates between self and society' (Bowie 2000: 88). Scheper-Hughes and Lock (2000) argue for notion of 'the mindful body,' and claim that we need to examine three levels or facets of the body, and explore the links between them, to fully appreciate just how the

body is used in this way (Bowie 2000: 88). They argue that we experience our bodies first on an individual level, “as an intricate part of ourselves,” which defines who we are. Secondly, our bodies are socially constructed, and are used symbolically, and are subject to cultural modification. Finally, Scheper-Hughes and Lock, argue, we have the “body politic,” a term that relates to the control of bodies on both an individual and a collective level (Bowie 2000: 88). They go on to argue that when we examine the formation of identity, all three level of body experience need to be considered. The outlaw biker’s body is therefore a classificatory mechanism that he uses to maintain and transform boundaries. The OMCs classificatory tools include their use of their particular gang patches to denote their affiliation to a specific clubs (as well as the overall ‘outlaw’ biker subculture), as well as their language, tattoos, jewellery, secondary clothing styles, hairstyles, ‘biker’ beards, and even the type and style of ‘outlaw’ motorcycles that they choose to ride to define their outlaw biker social identity. In fact much, if not all, of the ritualised initiation behaviour and club insignia is about identity – the ritual and symbolism that has evolved and has been refined is designed to anoint, and later identify a worthy biker as a ‘1%er’ – an ‘outlaw biker’ (not to be confused with bikers not prepared to live the lifestyle 24/7, with all that connotations that this lifestyle choice involves!) To borrow from Hughes and Lock, ‘the club’ is in fact the outlaw biker’s ‘body politic.’

Outlaw bikers in the South Island, as in other countries, designed rituals to induct members into their respective clubs. The literature and my participants confirm that these rituals vary from club to club as discussed earlier. Several of my participants have told me about their ‘patching’ which was often not particularly formal or elaborate, but a number did involve a soiling of their new colours. This was not necessarily done with human waste, as legend has it, and was often done with a concoction mixed in the kitchen from kitchen waste, etcetera. There does not appear to be a standard despoiling process – the quicker witted, alert individuals often avoided the bulk of mixture that had been collected to anoint them, which often occurred if they were caught off-guard outside the clubhouse as they were leaving, or when they were taken outside for the purpose of ‘Christening’ their new

colours. The purpose of these initiations is to bond the member to other patched members who have already experienced the process themselves, and to symbolically separate them from those not yet patched. These initiations serve the same purpose as those seen in more mainstream organizations where one is formally inducted into the inner sanctum or body of the organization. Van Gennep's (1960) argues that initiations are a powerful identity making process, and a significant rite of passage, which is what makes the patching ceremony (whatever form it takes) such a pivotal event for the member involved, and for club brothers (Van Gennep 1960: 115).

It is through initiation into a club as a member as a member that one becomes entitled to wear club colours. To be an outlaw is as much a mental concept as it is a physical statement. Few other sections of our society proudly wear their identity on their backs in public, and travel on such a highly visible platform – their motorcycle. Their 'patch' or 'colours' are transformative. Whilst there are many hardcore motorcycle enthusiasts riding large motorcycles on New Zealand roads every day of the week, a 'patched-up' club member who rides his motorcycle with élan at speed through traffic whilst flying his colours is transformed into something quite different – 'a modern-day urban outlaw,' who chooses to publicly align himself with a perceived deviant sub-culture operating at the margins.

Internationally and domestically, a number of the outlaw biker clubs' names suggest an interest in 'the satanic,' with names that reference 'Hell's,' 'Devils,' 'Diablos,' 'Pagans,' 'Satans,' 'Warlocks,' et al (Holt 1972). Some members chose to wear rings, tattoos etcetera inscribed with what are seen as pagan or satanic symbols ('666', pentangles, devil's heads, skulls), that suggest an interest in the occult, pagan rites, the satanic. The reality is that few have any interest in such things (Veno 2003: 141). Veno (2003: 141-142) quotes Australian bikers as saying:

That [Satanic worship and practices] is just bullshit. It's to put the wind up citizens. If somebody tried that shit on for real they'd get straightened out real quick.

**Lone Rider**



I can only remember one brother who went weird with the Devil stuff. He ended up going nuts and leaving the club, his wife and everything.

**Satan's Sinners**

It's shit man. There is nothing there but showing class to citizens by having a righteous name for a club. I mean, what sort of name says that you are independent and FTW [Fuck the World]? When we started out in the states the club was called the Booze Fighters, for Christ's sake. That was changed straightaway to what we are today ... Hell's Angels.

**Hell's Angel.**

The use of these names clearly indicates the South Island bikers desire to show a connection with bikers internationally, and perhaps be recognised as part of the international trend. However in New Zealand this association with Satan was played down. I have encountered few New Zealand outlaw bikers that deliberately wear and display satanic symbols, other than the satanic themed symbols that may directly relate to their particular club (For example, the *Devil's Henchmen*, *Satan's Slaves* and *Grim Reapers* back-patches, etcetera). Many wear silver rings bearing the name of their motorcycle of choice. A number have their club names tattooed on their bodies, and the 1%er symbol, as well as other symbolism, but satanic symbols are not hugely important in a largely secular society. Ferris (1995) records that he chose to leave the *Devil's Henchmen M.C.* because "... I could no longer wear the Devil's name on my back" (Ferris 1995, Ch. 14: 10). My participants confirm that during their evolution period in the late 1960s – early 1970s, some New Zealand outlaw bikers often took great delight in 'performing' in public with the express intention of shocking/mockng ('grossing-out') civilians present, or 'showing some class' in front of other bikers (Osgerby 2005: 88-91; 2003: 98-108, Levingston 2003, Thompson 1966: 68, 72, 120 – 122, 206). This sort of extravagant profane deviant behaviour, whilst being great fun, has a more serious purpose, as it serves to reinforce the 'outlaw's bikers' disdain for modern convention and 'the rules', thus reinforcing their place as outlaws living at the margins of society. The supposed association with the satanic serves a similar, symbolic purpose.

Symbolically, this kind of behaviour marks the boundary between OMCs and others, the mainstream. A number of my participants wryly note that they deliberately paid scant regard to their outward appearance in the late 60s/70s, although many still bathed regularly, and routinely wore clean, fresh clothing under their outer grimy club garb. Thompson (1966) records an Angel as observing, "...When you walk into a place when people can see you, you want to look as repulsive and repugnant as possible ... we are complete social outcasts – outsiders against society" Thompson 1966: 121-2). Okely (1983) notes that one way of remaining different from others in the greater society is by "pollution beliefs which both express and reinforce an ethnic (sic) boundary ... an inner/outer dichotomy" (Douglas 1966: 141-59, Okely 1983: 78 – 83, Cohen 1985: 41). But these self-imposed boundaries will only stretch so far:

... my old man went for two months once without taking a shower ... he wanted to see what it was like to live up to the reputation people gave us ... it finally got so bad I sez: Go pull out the other mattress – I ain't gonna sleep with you till you shower (Thompson 1966: 54).

Some of my participants have tattoos, but not too many are highly visible. Older members often have club tattoos on their backs, or arms, whilst latterly, members are more 'out-there' with their club 'tatts,' often displaying them on their heads, necks and hands (and occasionally on their faces). But not all outlaw bikers have tattoos. One of my participants has no tattoos at all, and cynically refers to more amateur visible tattoos as 'Monkey Stamps,' which he explained, reflects his contempt for individuals who cover their hands, faces, etcetera with institutional type tattoos.

New Zealand 'outlaw bikers' were exposed to international mass media representations of an outlaw biker from both the United Kingdom and North America during their formative years (arguably 1947 – 1975), and like all other outlaw clubs, largely modelled themselves on the Californian *Hell's Angels M.C.* template as discussed earlier. There were regional variations to some of the traditional biker accoutrements, and in club rituals and symbols, but these were often climatically motivated, and did not detract from the overall global subcultural representation of outlaw bikers. All of my participants from the period give

more than a passing mod to the Californian *Hell's Angel's* role in their evolution, regardless to their personal affiliation. Some had obtained *Hell's Angels* supporter T-Shirts and other *Hell's Angels* memorabilia from overseas as they become involved in the subculture. At that time (late 60s/early 70s), obtaining such items from overseas was considerably more difficult than it is today. There were very strict currency regulations in force relating to the purchase of overseas funds, so any attempt to remit money offshore invariably involved manual currency conversions, the purchase of international postal notes or money orders, and very specific customs declarations. But a genuine *Hell's Angels* supporter T-Shirt was worth the effort, as it represented a link to the ultimate outlaws – the Californian *Hell's Angels M. C.* One of the informal 'histories' that a participant has given me to read, talks of a young, slight member going to great lengths to import a *Hell's Angels* supporter shirt from the United States, only to find it was a huge American size – “He stood there full of pride, and red faced, looking like a child in grown-up's clothes. We began to think that the Hell's Angels were all 7 foot giants?” (Ferris 1995, Ch. 8: 10).

The Angels profile from the mid 60s, and their uncompromising attitude was admired. Essentially, the main difference between the Angels and other outlaw clubs, as Thompson confirms, is that they are more extreme. “Most of the others are part-time outlaws, but the Angels play the role seven days a week ...” (Thompson 1966: 82). Veno (2003: 188), and others, talk of a shift by some members and some clubs to criminal activities in the late 60s/early 70s, whilst arguing that clubs “are not criminal organisations” (Veno 2003: 73, 188-94). In 1979, the Californian *Hell's Angels* were prosecuted under the American *Racketeer Influenced and Criminal Organization Act* (RICO). Sonny Barger's defence has since become a reoccurring mantra – “... members commit crime, not the club” (Veno 2003: 73, 217). Whilst individual members did commit individual crimes, South Island OMC members of the late 60s – 1975 were not as 'criminal' as their overseas counterparts at the time, largely due to their age, and to their 'purest' commitment to their bikes and the ethos of outlaw biker brotherhood. As one participant who was involved in the South Island OMC sub-culture from the late 60s puts it, “... Hell ...we were only kids at the time

... we all thought that the (Californian) *Hell's Angels* and Sonny Barger were pretty fuckin' cool."

South Island bikers were riding in an environment that experienced very warm summer temperatures (October – March), and reasonable spring and autumn weather, but often experienced brutal winter conditions. During the depths of the southern winter, inland areas of the South Island are often subject to periods of heavy rainfall, snow to low levels, and heavy overnight frosts that are laid down on top of already wet roads. Some areas experiences patches of the treacherous 'black ice' that is virtually invisible to motorists until you hit them. All experienced New Zealand outlaw bikers that I have met can reel off a list of bikers that they have personally known who have lost their lives in road accidents. Most have survived serious crashes themselves. Whilst some of these unfortunate bikers were involved in accidents with other vehicles, a number crashed their bikes whilst attempting to take treacherous curves at higher speed, or hit patches of loose gravel, ice, surface water, road works, or other assorted inanimate objects. South Island roads are not for the fainthearted, but southern bikers willingly ride them, arguing that the freedom of living and riding in an under-populated region is more than adequate compensation for often dangerous and sometimes treacherous riding conditions.

From my personal observations (confirmed by many discussions with bikers) South Island bikers tend to be somewhat fatalistic about risk. During the late 60s/70s, outlaw bikers often rode their motorcycles all year round wearing their cut off colours during the ride. Bikers from the period now ruefully talk about how uncomfortable this was, but concede that 'outlaws' of the day just did not wear the same leather or padded jackets that other conventional bikers wore. The 'outlaw' would often warm up after a ride by wearing an ex-military greatcoat, but riding in colours required that the colours were visible at all times. They thus lived up to the image of the 'Southern Man' as being 'staunch', able to put up with hardship such as cold, and unafraid of potentially dangerous acts.

The mass media representations of New Zealand outlaw bikers in the late 60s/early 70s records that many wore German steel helmets, or fibreglass replicas of German steel helmets, until safety restrictions were introduced to require crash helmets to be certified and approved. Taking risks, and a healthy disdain for personal safety, was part of the outlaw biker image. One of the bikers that I interviewed said that he took to wearing a German steel helmet for a short period in the early 70s. He told me that he was somewhat shocked to experience a particularly hostile reaction directed at him by a group of older returned servicemen one day as he was riding past them, and immediately stopped wearing the helmet. He said that he respected these old soldiers, and had not realised at the time how offensive this item of headgear could be to those who saw active service in the Second World War. He said that at the time he admired German efficiency, particularly German engineering expertise, and took to wearing the helmet as an acknowledgement of German technological ability, more so than any other personal statement. Californian *Hell's Angel* 'Freewheelin' Frank Reynolds (1967), talks about the significance of German insignia from the Nazi era to *Hell's Angels*, and therefore to latter 'outlaw bikers' (Reynolds and McClure 1967: 9-10). He recounts a story to McClure about being in the company of 'Brother Ernie, of Daly City' (another *Hell's Angel*), when he was asked by 'a citizen' why he was wearing a swastika. Reynolds told McClure he rationalised it to the man as follows:

We feel that we are a superior race. The swastika signifies a superior race. We feel we are a superior race. "Which means everything and nothing at all," is what Ernie said. I added, ... we feel we are a superior race – it helps us generate togetherness (Reynolds and McClure 1967: 9-10).

Whilst many of the internationally recognised symbols that marked OMC identity were adopted by South Island outlaw 'outlaw' bikers during their formative periods, most South Island outlaw biker clubs tended to refrain from displaying more objectionable imagery from the late 70s onwards. Being an outlaw biker in New Zealand's South Island did not mean precisely the same as in the UK or the USA. In New Zealand, particular circumstances gave rise to a particular, local meaning of what it meant to be an outlaw

biker, one that overlapped considerably with the meaning in the USA and UK, but which was not quite the same. New Zealand is a very young country, so until relatively recent times, European New Zealanders had little or no sense of having a unique New Zealand identity. I can recall New Zealand born Europeans referring to the United Kingdom as 'home' in the 1950s/early 60s, even though they had never been there. European New Zealanders during the period under review (1950-1975) tended to look to the other side of the world for identity references, whilst also strongly identifying with the wide-open spaces and the way of life experienced in New Zealand at the time. But they also had their own concept of an ideal New Zealand (or 'Kiwi') male. Coney (2005) writes (of her father's generations):

They would be muscled, sinewy and tough; not effete, weak and bookish. They would be practical men; doers not thinkers. They expressed their culture not in theatres, galleries or pomp, but on the rugby field, in the backblocks [sections of rural land] in the great outdoors. It was a culture of the body, rather than the mind (Bannister 2005: 1).

The experiences and privations of earlier generations of Australian and New Zealand males who had been exposed to the rigours of war promoted an ideal of a strong, hardy, resilient and somewhat egalitarian New Zealand male (a 'man's man') to post-war New Zealand men (Phillips 1996: 131-216). Many of the outlaw bikers from that period were baby boomers, imbued with the same positive work ethic as many others in their society. Many of my older biker participants and 'contacts' have worked all of their adult lives. Many are semi-skilled or skilled labourers; some hold trade certificates, whilst others are successful small (legitimate) businessmen. I have been surprised at their contempt for those who attempt to shamelessly 'bludge' off the state, or who are considered work shy. Many of the older members disapproved of members who are sickness beneficiaries, or 'on the dole.' unless they have a very good reason. New Zealand outlaw bikers, in my experience, take considerable pride in not being beholden to anybody (including the state).

South Island males were arguably further exposed to an even more pronounced masculine culture, as many males gravitated to the south to take advantage of well-paid physical

employment opportunities that were often performed in rugged and harsh locations. Many of these economic migrants opted to stay in the south for both lifestyle and economic reasons, despite the isolation and hardships involved, and often took advantage of natural resources to hunt, fish and explore the hinterland and wild coastline, where physical toughness, self-sufficiency and resilience were considered to be a considerable asset. The robust independent Kiwi 'bloke' role model started to come under pressure to change as New Zealand society changed post WWII. Phillips (1996) devotes a chapter to a period that he has titled 'the bloke under siege, 1950 – 1995' (Phillips 1996: 261-289). Masculine societies that choose to live in harsh environments where rugged, independent, hardy male activities are encouraged tend to develop a degree of tolerance towards boisterous male bonding behaviours. The 'Southern Man' model of masculinity made outlaw bikers appear somewhat less deviant than they perhaps would have appeared to be in other, more traditional urban environments.

Earlier clubs often displayed Confederate flags in their club houses as a symbol of rebellion, as well as a symbol of them being 'southerners.' In addition, many southern outlaw bikers of the day carefully balanced their club life against their 'straight life,' which often involved engaging with the greater community in the workplace, on the sporting field, during recreational pursuits, or through the socialisation experienced in small, strong communities where community values are espoused. They were therefore never truly anonymous, outlaw bikers living at the margins of their society 24/7. Rather, they tended to have a club identity and a community identity, given that their involvement in the subculture was generally widely known in the greater community. But not all outlaw bikers of the period (or now) were into hedonistic pursuits. One of my participants is a life-long fly fisherman, whilst others are keen hunters or engaged in other outdoor recreational pursuits. One outlaw biker from the 70s observed, "... its a bit of a myth that we were all involved in heavy drinking and drug use. Some never got into it. In fact, some were really anti-drugs ... we thought too much Dak (sic) made you paranoid". This is echoed by Ferris (1995, Ch. 13: 1).

Most of the southern outlaw bikers in the late 60s/early 70s rode British motorcycles, particularly the larger *Triumph*, *BSA* and *Norton* models. “We started out as a loose knit bunch of mates who were into British bikes”. A few owned European bikes, particularly the high-performance *Ducati* racing bikes. Many of the British bikes ridden by the earlier ‘Rocker’ element in the south during the mid to late 60s were styled on the earlier British ‘café racer’ style, but the American ‘outlaw’ style started to emerge by the early 70s, with bikes being customised to reflect the American inspired chopper and bobber styles. But many of the bikes were dangerous machines to ride, as a great deal of the customising was done by the members themselves, and often compromises had to be made to meet budgets and the availability of suitable parts. This adaptation, which according to my participants, resulted in some bikes being fitted with oversized improvised ‘ape-hanger’ handlebars that sometimes flexed, if not fitted with bracing. They also tended to make bikes top heavy and dangerous to ride. One of my participants observed that one of the best craftsman electro-platers at the time refused to chrome ape-hangers ... “He’d refuse outright to chrome them, and used to go on and on about them being dangerous and that ...”. But, as several of my participants observed, ape-hangers were more an affectation of the northern clubs, particularly the ethnic clubs, than with the southern clubs. “You still see ‘ape-hangers’ on some of the northern club’s bikes,” one participant said - “... I dunno if it’s the cuzzy bro’ (sic) influence or not ... they dressed differently from us as well ... sort of more flashy ... (name deleted) told me that when he was riding down through the North Island recently, he was overtaken by these cuzzy bro’s from some northern club with bits of meat-bag muslin wrapped around their faces, going like the clappers down the white-line, over-taking cars and riding into on-coming traffic and that, on bikes still fitted with these fuckin’ big ape-hangers ...”<sup>6</sup> ‘Ape-hangers’ and extended front forks also made cornering a difficult exercise, as builders tried to emulate the *Easyrider* – ‘Captain America,’ model by dramatically extending their forks.

An interesting New Zealand example of the globalisation and the mass media can be seen in **Plate 12**. The photograph is of Fred Collett, a lifelong motorcyclist, who lived at the



time the photograph was taken at Gore, a small rural town in inland Southland, with is situated at the bottom of the South Island of New Zealand. The photograph was taken in 1949/1950, and clearly shows Fred astride a 1929 model 750cc Harley Davidson ‘Colt’ motorcycle, which Fred had customised by painting ‘Hell’s Angel’ on the ‘comb’ fixed atop his front mudguard. Fred had taken the idea from an English (forename unknown) ... “Illustrated” magazine that he said he had read as a teenager in the *Gore Public Library* around 1945 – 46. He recalls that the magazine had contained an article about the American 8<sup>th</sup> Army-Air Force’s 303<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group. The feature included a photograph of one of the 303’s B-17 bombers, which had the words ‘Hell’s Angel’ painted on its nose. Fred subsequently painted the name on his Harley-Davidson motorcycle around 1949 (much to the chagrin of his mother), along with some other modifications that he made to the motorcycle. He knew nothing about the *Hell’s Angels Motorcycle Club* at that time, so the name had no reference to others engaged in the same subculture – he was just taken with the name. The *Hell’s Angels* reputedly adopted the ‘Hells Angels’ name in 1948 from similar influences (Osgerby 2005: 45). It is interesting to consider that the same idea struck a young man living in a remote location on the other side of the world at pretty much at the same time as it did a group of outlaw bikers searching for a name to call themselves in California in 1948. This, I would argue, tends to confirm that names, catch-words and style are more likely to have been transported globally by the visual media of the day, than any actions represented in the stilted photographs of the day.<sup>7</sup>

One of my participants talks of a ‘chopped’ bike that he purchased from another club member in the early 70s. The machine had a backbreaking hard tail, the rear wheel being fitted with a car tyre. This motorcycle become a serious drain on his meagre financial resources, but he said he loved the bike, and was willing to spend whatever he could afford at the time to keep it on the road. I was with him at a social gathering when he was wryly talking about this problematic bike to a few other bikers, some of whom remembered the machine. A slightly younger biker who was listening to the conversation said that he remembered seeing my participant riding the motorcycle when he as a teenager, and said

he remembers being hugely impressed by its style. Although modern *Harley-Davidson* motorcycles did not appear on the outlaw scene in the South Island until the mid 70s, southern bikers were very familiar with them via American motorcycle magazines, and were aware that some North Island bikers already owned 'Harleys.' Even at that time, 'outlaw' clubs would not countenance members riding Japanese motorcycles, although many readily acknowledged the superior performance of some of the larger Japanese machines.

Most of my older participants still have a very strong identification with British motorcycles, even though many now ride Harleys. Those who were 'outlaw bikers' during this formative period, tend to see themselves as purists. "We had a shared interest in bikes ... and the camaraderie ... you just enjoyed their company". Many of my participants are genuinely bonded to each other, and their clubs, even though a number have moved on, and now only have limited contact with their former clubs. As one participant observed, "... there were a few people who were shit-bags, but most were more high-spirited than really bad guys ... most of the guys worked".

Halbwachs (1992) argues that human memory can only function within a collective context that can be evoked by 'things' and events ranging from war memorials to socially significant anniversaries, but also by family reminiscences or accounts of significant events in the past of a group or a category of people. He argues that collective memory is always selective, and that various groups of people have different collective memories, which in turn give rise to different modes of behaviour (Halbwachs 1992: 23 – 24). South Island outlaw motorcycle club members, like any other group of men with shared collective memories from their youth, remain bonded to each other by their experiences, and their shared social identity. They do not still have to be members of their clubs to be accepted – it is enough that they were once outlaw bikers, and they have not turned their backs on the experience. This collective memory sustains clubs during hard times, and provides them with a considerable support mechanism, when the going gets tough. Goffman (1959)

argued that social interaction does not necessarily need to be a particularly profound experience for it to be significant (Goffman 1959: 242-3). These current and former members interacted with each other in a sub-culture of like-minded people as young men, and continue to do so today. The fact that some sections of the greater community see their chosen sub-culture as deviant is not lost on them – it is just too important for most of them to completely let go. Like most who have a collective memory that transcends the years, all of the hardships and the pain experienced at the time tend to be forgotten at reunions as they fondly remember the ‘good times.’

In my experience (confirmed by participant observation), ‘outlaw’ bikers are often wary of strangers and outsiders, and suspicious of the motivations of others. They adopt a rather aloof stance if they are in unfamiliar territory, or are unsure of the identity or motivation of any interloper. But on the basis of my observations, outlaw bikers also tend to try to get along with their neighbours (once the neighbours have gotten over the shock of having them move in next door), and often work to develop quite positive relationships with their immediate community, particularly the elderly.<sup>8</sup> Thompson (1966), talking about his observations of routine interactions between *Hell’s Angels* and ‘others,’ writes:

... they (sic) are generally receptive, in any action beyond their own turf, to people who haven’t prejudged them to the extent of assuming that they have to be dealt with violently. They are so much aware of their mad-dog reputation that they take a perverse kind of pleasure in being quiet and friendly (Thompson 1966: 91).

‘Outlaw’ bikers see themselves as the elite of modern-day outlaws, and in a totally different social category to ethnic and street gang members, who they generally consider to be ‘criminals and lowlifes’ (Veno 2003: 40–1, 65–6, 75). I have certainly experienced this contempt for street and ethnic gang members during my interaction with my participants. I also noted that they readily differentiate between different ‘outlaw’ clubs, as Veno does (Veno 2003: 75). The reality is that some clubs are easier to get on with than others. From personal experience (and from explanations offered by my participants), the attitude of a club to outsiders is often influenced by the personal attitudes of strong individuals within

the club, by friction between clubs, by resistance to pressure from the authorities, and because of the criminality of some club members. Like any community, outlaw clubs experience periods of fission and fusion, but I have been struck by the genuine sense of community that I have experienced amongst the bikers that I have come to know, and their genuine caring and compassion for their own, and for their extended families. I have observed (and my participants have confirmed to me) that showing respect is a very serious matter for all outlaw bikers, internationally and domestically, so the habit of caring for and visiting the incarcerated, sick and bereaved (including the extended families of current and former friends and associates), is considered by many to be a very solemn duty, and not one to be taken lightly. Outlaw bikers who do not show respect are immediately and bluntly reminded of their obligations to their brothers and their extended families and 'friends.' I have observed outlaw bikers chide and sometimes openly criticise others who do not immediately conform to this expectation.

In New Zealand and elsewhere, a defining moment for any club is a member's funeral. Funerals are very solemn occasions, and members are expected to attend in full 'uniform.' Allied clubs travel great distances to be there, and invariably the death is symbolically commemorated, although at times, such commemoration can be a very touchy subject to the deceased's 'other family,' so due deference is shown to the biological family's wishes. From personal experience of attending biker funerals, and from the accounts of my participants, where the biological family denies the club's request to take part in the ceremony, the club will improvise a solemn ceremony of their own later at the graveside if the member is interred, or at the deceased member's memorial stone if cremated. Thompson (1966) argues that funerals are a form of affirmation for the bikers – 'not for the dead, but for the living.' He rather eloquently argues:

In the cheap loneliness that is the overriding fact of every outlaw's life, a funeral is a bleak reminder that the tribe is smaller by one. The circle is one link smaller, the enemy jacks up the odds just a little bit more, and defenders need something to take off the chill. A funeral is a time for counting the loyal, for seeing how many are left. There is no question about skipping work, going without sleep or riding for hours in a cold wind to be there on time (Thompson 1966: 276).

Memorials to deceased members are often displayed on the walls in their respective clubhouses, and sometimes in the clubhouses of affiliate clubs. The violent or accidental deaths of my participants' club 'brothers' are still as fresh in their minds today as they were when the individual died. One member told of the bonding that he experienced with other club members during the 74 – 75 Christchurch 'biker wars.' He said that they were formed between members who "... stuck around ... who were staunch ... you know, they would be there when you needed them". Ferris (1995) writes of this feeling of camaraderie amongst the *Devil's Henchmen* following the homicide of *Devil's Henchmen* member Gregory Slack in December of 1974. He records "... we rode back to Convoy Street after the graveside vigil and stood on the footpath outside the tin fence commiserating together ... (Ferris 1995, Ch. 13:1). Another club member from the period who had been close to the deceased rather articulately expressed his feelings about the death of his friend by referring to a famous play by the New Zealand playwright Bruce Mason:

...I remember later reading and thinking about Bruce Mason's (sic) *End of the Golden Weather* ... I thought that it sort of summed it all up for me ... I remember when Sir David Beattie (sic) made reference to the *End of the Golden Weather* at Bruce Mason's funeral ... it all came flooding back ...

The anniversary of this member's death is regularly memorialised in the *In Memoriam* column of the Christchurch *Press* newspaper, and members from the time still visit the member's grave on the anniversary of his death. At least one member had the deceased member's name and letters 'R.I.P' tattooed on his body to memorialise the traumatic event. Several of the members from the period are aware that I worked on the homicide investigation that followed inquiry as a young detective, and have made reference to it in such a way that I have felt they were seeking reassurance that their friend death was quick. It was evident to me that time does not appear to have tempered their genuine feelings of loss.

## 5. Conclusion:

Whilst the international generic 'outlaw' biker brotherhood ethos is reinforced in historical biker film and literature, it would be trite to argue that the New Zealand outlaw bikers who were the foundation members of the early clubs simply embraced this central tenet solely because of what they read and saw in the mass media of the day. A 'brotherhood' ethos is central to any organizational culture where men become bonded to others. The early New Zealand 'outlaw' clubs were often formed around a group of siblings, friends and associates, and others were subsequently absorbed into the club after they became 'friends' of the club by becoming 'associates' (or 'hangarounds' to use the North American term), and then prospects (or 'strikers' for North America).

The South Island clubs that survived their formative years, and which were presenting a strong and united front by the end of 1975, were the clubs with a sufficient number of core members who were individually and collectively committed to the form of kinship that is commonly referred to as 'biker brotherhood.' One of my participants describes it as "... a sense of family.' Whilst some 'outlaw' clubs are more hardcore than others, it is the biker brotherhood ethos more than anything else that bonds individual members to their club brothers and to their clubs (Harris 1985, Thompson, 1966, Veno 2003: 80-1). Whilst biker brotherhood can at times be a somewhat fragile concept, the clubs that have a sufficient number of core members who genuinely commit themselves to living by this code tend to survive and flourish. South Island OMCs of the period benefited considerably from the prevailing view of the day that the desirable ideal New Zealand male was a strong, independent, self-sufficient, robust individual personified by the earlier ANZAC soldier. The ANZAC soldier role model was forged by collective experiences of warfare, loss and privation and he placed great store in the Australasian form of kinship known as 'mateship,' an ethos that highly values personal courage, loyalty, ingenuity, self sufficiency, balanced risk-taking and self-sacrifice, and above all, an indomitable spirit in the face of adversity. It also arguably tends to imply that on occasions, loyalty to others and resistance in the face of adversity can be more important than adhering to all of the rules.

## Chapter 6

### Media, Police and Moral Panic

“He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster.  
And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you”.

Friedrich Nietzsche  
*Jenseits von Gut und Bose*  
(1886)  
Ch. 9, no. 260

#### 1. “The Big Blue Gang” – South Island OMCs and the Police

Cohen (1985) talks of ‘opposition and boundary’ as it pertains to the symbolic construction of community, and argues:

...the sense of social self at the levels of both individuality and collectivity are informed by implicit or explicit contrast. Individuals are said to define themselves by reference to a ‘significant other’; likewise, ‘self-conscious’ cultures and communities ...  
(Cohen 1985: 115).

Police can always be considered to be a ‘significant other,’ as far as OMCs are concerned, because they are the group that offers the greatest threat to the clubs, and so are omnipresent in the ‘outlaw’ biker’s consciousness (Boon 1982: 6, 25, Cohen 1985: 115 – 118, Veno 2003: 212-29). Most of my participants chose to make reference at some stage to their individual and collective interactions with the police during their formative club years, and to their individual and collective responses. As I progressed with my research, I came to appreciate that this tension between OMCs and the police may in fact be pertinent to the construction of their social identity. As I spoke to a number of participants from the period, I became increasingly convinced that there was a relationship between the attempts by representatives of the conservative policing apparatus of the day to suppress outlaw motorcycle ‘gangs’ or ‘bikies,’ and their resistance to this, which I will argue, resulted in the further development of the emergent ‘outlaw’ motorcycle subculture.

Veno (2003) makes a rather extreme claim when he argues, “... for outlaw clubs there is one battle that will outlive all other club wars. That’s the war with the Big Blue Gang. If

you think the clubs bear animosity towards each other, it's nothing compared to the hatred they feel for the police" (Veno 2003: 212). He argues that the police and the outlaw clubs "... have become natural enemies, to the point that the clubs regard the police as a gang, driven by the same motives as any other gangs – power and domination. It's why they refer to the police as the Big Blue Gang" (Veno 2003: 212). Veno goes on to say that it may appear irrational for the clubs to think this way, but argues that their attitude is perhaps understandable when you consider a picture that was published in the *Western Australian* (newspaper) in 2000, which showed an officer from the Western Australian Police Outlaw Motorcycle Gang Taskforce (*OMCG*) wearing a badge with '99%' clearly inscribed upon it. Veno argued:

... to the clubs, that signalled quite clearly the attitude of the police, even if it appeared that police misinterpreted the 1% badge as referring to the outlaw clubs being 1 per cent of the mainstream society, not 1 per cent of the biker world ... (Veno 2003: 212).

This may be the case for Australia – I'm not in a position to challenge Veno's argument as it relates to the Australian Police, although he does rather back away from this extreme statement a little further on in this chapter of his book - but I would argue that it is not entirely applicable to New Zealand. Given the demographics of the South Island of New Zealand, most 'outlaw' bikers in any locality know individual police officers through family connections, sports activities, or through motorcycling. Whilst the 'outlaw' biker is generally a little wary and suspicious around police officers socially, most eventually tend to treat police officers as individuals, and not hate them generically, as they may a rival club, particularly a club they are at war with. From my personal experience, and from the accounts of my participants, I am aware that New Zealand Police officers will sometimes light-heartedly tell gang members that "we have more patched members than you have," or "we're a bigger gang than you are." This is perhaps indicative of their ready acknowledgement that both groups do have a very similar organisational culture.<sup>1</sup>

Several police officers that I have discussed Veno's 'Big Blue Gang' argument with have initially bristled at the notion, but most have eventually accepted there is some validity in



his observation. Most New Zealand outlaw club members that I have spoken to, or have previously dealt with as a police officer, generally try not to unnecessarily alienate the police, but will not kowtow to them either. I was with a group of current and former outlaw bikers in a restaurant during my fieldwork when the subject of police road stops came up. One of the senior patched members present that day said that he was always polite around the police, and would always comply with requests to produce his driver's licence, and answer any appropriate questions civilly, as he had found that this approach caused him a lot less trouble in the long run than taking a more truculent attitude from the outset. Several others agreed, which does tend to give some credence to Veno's argument that club members are acutely aware of the power of the police, and do not consciously want to meet it head on, unless they feel that they have to make a stand. But it also tends to confirm that in New Zealand, relations between outlaw bikers and police may not be as fractious as they are perhaps in Veno's Australia, or in North America. Thompson (1966) quotes Preetam Bobo, a legendary Californian *Hell's Angel* from the 60s, who observed:

...all it takes is the sense to be quiet around cops, he says. Whenever we had trouble with the law I just drifted off to the side and kept my mouth shut. If a cop ever asked me a question I'd answer politely and say "sir". In those situations, man, a cop appreciates someone calling him "sir". It's the smart thing to do, that's all. And besides, it's a hell of a lot cheaper than going to jail (Thompson 1966: 70).

Veno did somewhat qualify his earlier statements about the outlaw bikers hatred of 'The Big Blue Gang' (2003) by latterly arguing that OMCs couldn't survive being completely hostile to the police. They have to conform to things such as liquor licenses and the regulations that govern the running of public events, such as concerts. He goes on to argue:

... the clubs believe the police unjustly harass them and that the politicians use them as a public whipping boy. However, most bikies believe the rank and file coppers are doing a job, and will treat them with the respect they themselves are shown. There isn't always animosity between the clubs and the cops. As one outlaw bikie told me, there's nothing wrong with the average cop, it's just the occasional asshole who doesn't like bikies that makes life hard ... (Veno 2003: 212, 229),

Some police officers are readily recognised by ‘outlaw’ bikers as being fair and approachable, regardless to whether they are casual, or a little more zealous in the execution of their duties (Veno 2003: 229). Unlike many other groups that choose to operate at the margins, New Zealand outlaw bikers tend to be somewhat philosophical about their brushes with authority, unless they feel they have a genuine grievance (Veno 2003: 229). I have been told by almost all of my participants and their associates about individual police officers who they claim to have had some regard for, and others who they considered to be too heavy handed, inflexible, or a few who appeared to blindly hate all ‘gang’ members. These observations accord with comments made by Veno in his book (Veno 2003: 229). From personal experience, and from the comments made by my participants, in the 1970s most outlaw bikers tended to treat the police in direct response to how they were being treated. One individual, who is not anti-police, said that he and his club mates would sometimes “have a yarn” with outwardly sympathetic police they encountered on their travels, and of “having a bit of rapport” with some of the police officers they routinely dealt with at the time. “... Some cut you a bit of slack – others put the pressure on you all the way – so you’d turn around and not tell them where you were going or be very cooperative ...’

Like many older former policemen, older outlaws believed that policing in New Zealand has changed in more recent years, and that the earlier, ‘old, experienced cop’ has been replaced with less experienced, often more rigid ‘traffic-policing’ orientated officers, who they believe are more inclined to see things in ‘black and white’. I found it interesting when participants named names, because they often identified police officers that I knew were considered by other officers to be aggressive or ‘difficult,’ had poor people skills, or who were inclined to take a ‘black and white’ approach to their policing duties. The ‘good cops’ that were identified to me (and who I knew by reputation, or knew personally), were invariably mature, experienced officers who were considered by other experienced officers to possess sound, natural people skills and to exercise good judgement (particularly where flexibility and discretion is concerned). My participants readily spoke of these officers as

being professional, ethical, consistently even-handed, good humoured, and generally more inclined to see things in shades of grey. Interestingly, these ‘good cops’ were not necessarily older officers – some were mature younger officers who prided themselves on their professionalism, and in their ability to carry out proactive, real world ‘street policing’ by interacting with their community.

In my experience, police officers who are recreational bikers themselves, or who are genuinely interested in motorcycles, often strike up convivial conversations with outlaw bikers, unless the bikers sense that the officers are patronising or mocking them. I am aware of one former police officer who has a genuine, long standing friendships with a number of current and former outlaw bikers due to his life-long interest in motorcycles, and his skills as an accomplished bike-builder and restorer. This former officer has not compromised his standards, or denigrated his former career – the friendships that he has made and maintained are based on their shared love of motorcycles.

Therefore, in general terms, I feel comfortable in arguing that many of the New Zealand OMC members that I have spoken to recently (and those I have interacted with over the past 40 years), are/were not blindly anti-police. I do not believe that they have been moderating their opinions out of deference to me, but then many of my current outlaw biker acquaintances are now older, mature men who carefully balance their club life with their family life in the greater community. Most are men who would rather go home at a reasonable hour rather than carouse in the clubhouse like they perhaps used to do. Many are now acutely conscious of health issues and public safety, and drink in moderation (or don’t drink alcohol at all), and if they do partake, more than likely will cadge a ride home, or share a taxi with others. I was invited to one function where a courtesy coach was provided to take revellers home.

Generally, younger members are certainly more on their guard, or are more standoffish than are older, experienced club members. It also depends on what they are up to at the time. The current police driven moral panic regarding the methamphetamine based drug

'P' that is currently being played out in the New Zealand mass media has tended to polarise views, so many 'users' are increasingly wary, and on their guard, even with their own. In saying that, the police still remain the 'other.' Most outlaw bikers are therefore wary of police, and initially mistrust any new officers they have to deal with (including ex-officers).

'Narks' or 'rats' (police informers) are an anathema to clubs. There is an absolute 'no-narking' stricture in 'outlaw' biker circles that is both stated and implied. It is clear and unequivocal (and universally understood by all who belong to, or are associated with outlaw clubs) - 'narking' will result in your being thrown out of the club 'in bad standing' and can get you killed. In the late 60s/early 70s club members would occasionally cooperate with police, particular during homicide investigations, and would sometimes make guarded witness or exculpatory statements. This practice had ceased by the mid 70s, as friction between clubs and the police created a climate where a refusal to cooperate was recognised as a legitimate form of sub-cultural resistance. However, today, turncoat informants remain a club's greatest threat (Lavigne 1987, 1996, 1999, 2004, Veno 2003: 223 – 229). Today, it is seen as bad form for members or associates to even report crime to the police, or even cooperate with police if they are summoned as a witness in any proceedings. If they are aggrieved, they are expected to come to their club for support, or sort it out themselves. And from personal experience and observation, they do just that. But (and indicative of how complex and paradoxical 'outlaw' biker ideology can be), I know one biker who was seriously injured when he came to the aid of his neighbours when they disturbed intruders, and two who have chased down (and caught) "lowlife" offenders who had stolen property from shops they patronised, and who had tried to decamp after assaulting or resisting the owners or employees who tried to detain them. Outlaw bikers will become actively involved in mainstream community response when something offends their sense of fair play, or threatens their personal security or the security of their dependants or their immediate community (including where they live, shop, socialise and interact with the greater public). This is indicative to me of the complexity of outlaw biker

ideology, and perhaps a reminder that it is difficult to generalise about the individuals that are engaged in this sub-culture.

The most vociferous complaints I have heard about police were primarily about police officers considered to be (or to have been) somewhat underhand in their dealings with 'outlaw' club members. My participants clearly indicate that outlaw bikers believe, with good reason, that the Police use the media to ratchet up pressure on the clubs (Veno 2003: 66), Butterworth 2005: 246). They read and watch these media stories with a critical eye, and often discuss the balance of the item, and the professionalism of the language used by any police spokesperson directly quoted in the article. From what bikers have said to me, they are not unreasonable in their critical analysis of what is written about them – if they feel that any negative comments are justified, they accept them without criticism. One of the scrapbooks that I was loaned to review contained a surprisingly broad range of newspaper cuttings from the 1970s, which confirmed for me the owners willingness (both then and now) to objectively read and assess what the media was writing about him and his club mates. This participant has demonstrated to be on many occasions that he has an open mind about a surprisingly broad range of issues by bringing me an eclectic assortment of newspaper cuttings and magazine articles to read over the past few years that he thought may be applicable to my research.

A number of participants and their associates cited instances where vindictive or mischievous police officers unnecessarily forced entry, damaged personal or club property, particularly motorcycles, during mass police raids, or deliberately carried out an unnecessarily robust search of the premises, and then refused to make any effort to clean up afterwards. Club members also spoke of instances where police members unlawfully 'souvenired' photographs and club memorabilia. This accords with my personal experience as a police officer.<sup>2</sup>

I was acutely aware from personal experience, which was reinforced by the accounts of my participants, that police officers rely on the mass media to provide them with information

about 'others' in their society, as much as anyone else. This information is supplemented by internal police 'briefing' material, verbal interaction with other police officers, and from personal interaction with members of such groups. There is therefore considerable room for distortion of fact, prejudice, and outright misinformation and mythmaking.

Representatives of law enforcement are without doubt a major component in the creation of myths about OMCs (Veno 2003: 57 – 9, 128, 148, 160-2, Lavigne 2004: viii).<sup>3</sup> An interesting local example of this is a 'National News Story' that was published in New Zealand national newspapers on the 27 October 2005. The article was headlined, 'Police Blame Gangs in Toddler Abuse Case,' and quoted a detective 'who headed the investigation' as saying, "Do not blame the families, blame the gangs ... It is an incredibly violent environment and members use violence to deal with situations that arise – that is all they know" (NZPA (Electronic copy), 27 October 2005: no pagination). He was talking about a case that involved the physical abuse of a very young child, including admissions of physical beatings, and the forcing of the child to eat dog faeces. Whilst the police officer was talking about a person with an association with a specific ethnic street gang, he chose to make his highly charged, generalised statement in such a way that he encompassed all 'gangs.' When I sought a response to this story from some of my participants, they were contemptuous of the individual involved, and muttered darkly about how they would like to deal with him. They also confirmed my belief, reinforced by the literature, that outlaw clubs always see themselves as several cuts above most ethnic or street 'gangs' (Thompson 1966: 14, Veno 2003: 61-85). But many mainstream New Zealanders who read the story probably accepted what the police officer had said without question, as comments made by a person in authority.<sup>4</sup>

Whilst law enforcement attempted to control, and at times suppress the OMCs during the late 60s and early 70s, the clubs were able to gain a foothold in New Zealand, despite the best efforts of individual politicians and the odd zealot within the New Zealand Police organization at times to suppress 'gangs,' or to at least seriously regulate their activities (Tait 1978: 69 – 70, Butterworth 2005: 188). Police organizations must operate within the

law, so outlaw bikers were ultimately able to survive and subsequently flourish, as the clubs defined and refined their generic 'outlaw' identity within the constraints of their society. Cohen (1993) argued that culture is best argued as multifarious and dynamic rather than monolithic (Cohen 1993: 195). An anthropological analysis shows that culture refers to the devices that people employ to find meaning in their world (Cohen 1993: 195). He observes, "symbols serve to convey meaning and to reinforce identity, which is how people define themselves, and ethnicity, by which individual people lay claim to this or that culture" (Cohen 1993: 195). In essence, "culture as identity" (Cohen 1993: 195). From the late 60s, members of OMCs sent very clear and unequivocal signals about their individual and collective identity by such symbols. But whilst the police had to tolerate their presence, some individuals within the police were of a mind to make life as difficult as possible for the outlaw clubs. This proactive and increasingly aggressive policing response to outlaw clubs between 1972-1975 will be discussed in the following section to reinforce my argument that sub-cultural resistance is one of the core reasons why the outlaw motorcycle sub-culture continues to exist in New Zealand today.

## 2. **The New Zealand Police and Moral Panic**

Dennehy and Newbold (2001) note that a 'special interdepartmental committee to investigate gangs' was formed in 1970, and subsequently reported back with 'a number of confidential recommendations about strategies for gang violence' (Dennehy and Newbold 2001: 170). They note that questions were subsequently asked in Parliament in 1971 about the confiscation of convicted gang members' motor vehicles. Veno (2003) observed that:

In Australia, South Africa and New Zealand the really heavy police attention is usually focussed on clubs only during turf wars or other sensationalist club crimes, as with the recent cases in South Australia and Western Australia (Veno 2003: 214).

I will take a more controversial line and argue on the basis of the evidence presented below, that individual police commanders and police service organizations readily highlight social issues in the mass media, which often precipitates forms of moral panic both nationally and regionally. Spokespersons for law enforcement organizations can be

very influential in precipitating the periodic outbreaks of media driven moral panic about the alleged activities of readily identifiable marginalised groups, particularly outlaw motorcycle ‘gangs,’ which are highly visible, deviant ‘usual suspects’ (Tait 1978: 68-70, Cohen 2002: xxxv, 122 – 4), Veno 2003: 59, Butterworth 2005: 188, 246). I will cite several examples of this phenomenon to reinforce this contention, and will argue that these periodic media driven moral panics play an important role in how outlaw bikers ultimately define their social identity in the face of hostility, fear and suspicion (Jenkins 1996: 120-5). I will argue that police tactics are an important component in how a club or ‘gang’ ultimately chooses to present itself to its greater community, as Veno observed when he compiled a report on biker violence at Bathurst for the *Australian Criminology Research Council* in the early 1980s (Veno 2003: 9). Rothenbuhler and Coman (2005) argued:

News, like folklore and myth, is a cultural construction, a narrative that tells a story about things of importance or interest. Journalists like to think that news somehow mirrors reality, that it objectively describes events; news is “out there” to be discovered. However news does not exist until it is written, until it becomes a story, and what is deemed newsworthy owes as much to our cultural conceptions of what makes a “good story” as it does to ideas of importance or significance (Rothenbuhler and Coman, 2005: 222)

Essentially, I am arguing that boundaries are constituted dialectically, and are based on feedback from ‘the other,’ and not just simply constructed in reference to some ‘other,’ or brought about by the actions of the other. So they are not just simply relational to the other, but are in fact interactional with ‘the other’ (Boon 1982: 6, 26, Cohen 1985: 115-8). Overt reactive police pressure on ‘gangs’ often results in forms of sub-cultural resistance, where the members feel compelled to demonstrate their continued existence by some public display (Hall and Jefferson 1993: 45-52, Veno 2003: 9, 189).

Cohen (2002: xxxv) records that the term ‘moral panic’ was first used by the sociologist Jock Young in ‘The Role of the Police as Amplifiers of Deviancy, Negotiators of Reality and Translators of Fantasy,’ in 1971, although both credit McLuhan (1964) as being the originator of the term (Cohen 2002: 37). Essentially, moral panic is a disproportionate



public reaction in response to actions deviating from established social and cultural norms (Turner 2006: 400-1). Moral panics are based on a perceived threat to mainstream society, and are often constructed in relation to third parties, often perceived as vulnerable members of that society, such as adolescents. Moral panic has a particular relevance to subcultures, as they usually involve the identification of a 'folk devil,' which is held to be responsible for whatever moral or social damage has supposedly occurred (Turner 2000: 231, 2006: 401).

Cohen (2002), Thornton (1996) Turner (2000, 2006) note that in contemporary societies, the mass media may play a very large role in moral panics, spreading rumour about the 'folk devils,' and contributing to a spiral of anxiety and fear. Responses from legislative and executive sections of the state, often via the mass media, invariably precipitate calls for punishment or the restoration of proper moral values (Thornton 1996: 119-20, 129, 131-7, 145, Turner 2000: 231, Cohen 2002: 135 – 9, Critcher 2003: 12 - 13, Turner 2006: 401). Turner (2000) notes that moral panics may take the form of a moral crusade led by an often self-appointed moral entrepreneur, "who may make the rectification of the perceived evil into their life's work" (Turner 2000: 231). Thornton's (1996) study highlighted the complex interplay between subcultures and mass media in which sub-cultural credibility is derived from hostile media coverage (Thornton 1996: 161, Turner 2006: 401).

In New Zealand, the early to mid 70s saw the growth of a police-driven moral panic in the media about 'bikies,' as old style police officers fought to address what they saw as a decline in standards and morality, and a weakening approach to robust policing (Tait 1978: 68-80, Cohen 2002: 122-4, Butterworth 2005: 188, 191, 246). Cohen (2002) talks about a 'warning stage' in the build up of moral panic, which started to occur in the South Island from the early 70s, as Police officers started to make dire pronouncements about increasing 'bikie' disorder (Cohen 2002: 122-4). For example, a headline from *The Truth*, from January 1976 reads, 'Thugs on Two Wheels: Violence & Disorder – the gangs at war'. It lambasts the Labour politicians of the day for being "all talk, no action", and invites

readers to write in and "... have your say ...” (*The Truth*, 6 January 1976). Bikies became ‘folk devils,’ and Police officers like Gideon Tait were more than ready to assume the role of moral entrepreneur to enter into a full-blown moral crusade (Tait 1978: 68–80, Abercrombie *et al* 2000: 231; Cohen 2002: 96, 100, 106–7, Butterworth 2005: 188, 191, 246). This moral panic was largely played out in the mass media of the day. The bikers did not help themselves as they lived up to the expectation of the general public and the media. The reality is that youthful outlaw bikers, performing in public places in a relatively conservative society, together with copious amounts of alcohol, the emerging use of recreational drugs, the omni-present expectant media, large captive audiences, and the presence of disapproving representatives of authority, were a very potent mix.

Whilst the news media apparatus that catered to the mainstream of New Zealand society in the late 60s/early 70s increasingly wrote about negative aspects of OMC and ethnic gang culture, there was a countervailing tendency by some to view this youth subculture as an increasingly important social movement. This led to an interesting relationship developing between gangs, clubs and politics in New Zealand in the late 60s, early 70s. Gustafson (2000) discusses the strange relationship that developed between the then Prime Minister, Sir Robert Muldoon, the leader of the National Party, and the Maori gangs, particularly *Black Power* (Gustafson 2000: 206-7). He talks of a bizarre informal meeting between Muldoon and gang members at the Royal Tiger Tavern in Wellington in 1976, when the Police were called, and Muldoon chose to leave with the gang members to continue drinking with them at a nearby address. Gustafson notes, “Muldoon’s continued interest in finding accommodation for gang members, turning gangs into social clubs, and encouraging gangs to contract through work trusts was balanced by his tough rhetoric and support for the police against the gangs’ violence and criminal activities”(Gustafson 2000: 207).<sup>5</sup>

In late 1975/early 1976 a participant recalls that members of the Christchurch chapter of the *Devil’s Henchmen M.C.* met with their local Member of Parliament, Bruce Barclay,

who surprised them by agreeing to come to their clubhouse to discuss mooted anti-gang legislation with the members. Barclay left a very good impression with those involved. This meeting was in no way unique, and is indicative of the interest that some of the clubs took in the political events of the day.

In the late 60s and early 1970s, Police commanders often deployed 'Shadow Patrols' to travel with travelling bands of outlaw bikers (Tait 1978: 71, Kelsey and Young 1982: 74–80). My participants have talked extensively about these patrols, and most have fond memories of a number of the policemen who carried them out. One of my participants claims that a police sergeant who used to carry out Shadow Patrols in the central North Island in the 1970s, had actually been an 'outlaw' biker himself in his youth. Often these patrols were made up of more experienced officers, most of whom just wanted a quiet life, so they soon established ground rules with the biker leadership. Heavy-handed or over-zealous police officers, that attempt a more draconian approach, found that the bikers would break up and deliberately lose them, much to the chagrin of the Shadow Patrol's supervising officers. The reality is experienced operational Police officers, like many others who perform similar duties (prison officers, etcetera), soon learn that flexibility, and a willingness to compromise a little can make such tasks a lot easier. Tait (1978) was aghast to learn that one of the Shadow Patrols were actually carrying some of the 'bikies' gear' in the boot of their car, and arbitrarily banned the practice (Tait 1978: 71).

From 1970 New Zealand saw an increasing number of rowdy, boisterous 'outlaw' bikers periodically travel throughout the country, often in convoy, to attend various festivals, resort areas, and other locations. The 1972 Christchurch *University of Canterbury* student magazine, *Canta*, devoted the cover and two centre pages to 'Bikies – Palmerston' (Canta 1972, cover, 8 – 9). The feature was essentially a series of photographs taken during an annual *Epitaph Riders M.C.* run to join other clubs in Palmerston North (in the southern part of the North Island), during Easter Weekend, 1972, when a clash occurred between members of the local *Mothers M.C* and the *Mongrel Mob*. The front cover features an

*Epitaph Rider*, who from memory was known as ‘Alfred E.’ (after the *Mad Magazine* character), photographed standing behind the gates at the Wellington Ferry Wharf Building, holding the bars as though behind prison bars (**Plate 13**). What is interesting about this article is that it rails against the New Zealand news media of the day. The article singles out *The Truth* in particular, which carried an article that opened with, “the smell of fear haunted a city for four days at Easter weekend. It ended in an explosion of raw, bloody violence.” The *Canta* contributor “Rex and a bikie who was there” critiqued the *The Truth* article as “emotive crap” (Canta 1972: cover, 8 - 9). The article makes reference to a subsequent *Television New Zealand* ‘Gallery’ programme, hosted by broadcaster Brian Edwards that screened the following Tuesday evening, when Edwards attempted to put matters in perspective. One of my participants remembers this programme, and said that he thought that it was well balanced, and that it was considerably more objective than the earlier media coverage of the Palmerston North disturbances had been. He recalls a member of the *Epitaph Riders* being interviewed, and said he acquitted himself well, articulating not only his version of events, but something about the outlaw biker lifestyle as well.

This increased emphasis on ‘bikie gangs’ in the New Zealand mass media, and the resulting mini moral panics that ensued, prompted the then leader of the Labour Party, Norman Kirk, to promise during the 1972 election campaign, to ‘crack down on bikies’ (Tait: 68). Kirk mooted laws to ‘seize bikies’ motorcycles (Tait 1978: 68). This pronouncement was mana from heaven for some senior police officers, who took this as license to ratchet up the pressure on clubs, or as the then Officer in Charge of the Christchurch Police District, Gideon Tait, put it in the title of a chapter of his book, *Never Back Down*, to seize the opportunity to have ‘A Crack at the Bikies’ (Tait 1978: 68-80). Tait would later say he was acutely disappointed when Kirk later told him that he was meeting opposition from members of his own party, and would have difficulty following through on his promises (Tait 1978: 68). Tait was ultimately not too deterred however by this perceived lack of support, although he bitterly complains in his book about ‘liberals’

“who will look for excuses when a lout is guilty of violence and yet will be quick to cry ‘Fascism’ if a policeman finds it necessary to resort to violent measures to defend himself or to deal with a violent situation” (Tait 1978: 69-70). His book displays a pathological hatred of ‘bikie goons,’ or ‘animals’ as he choses to call them (Tait 1978: 69).

In his book, Tait is critical of the then Commissioner of Police, Gus Sharp, for ordering an inquiry in police violence against ‘bikie goons’ at the 1972 Alexandra Blossom Festival, which resulted in police officers subsequently being disciplined, and some fined for the use of excessive force. “It was a shattering blow to police morale and a shot in the arm to the bikies” (Tait 1978: 69). Essentially, this was a clash between old style policing, and attempts at the time to modernise a dated, ponderous New Zealand police organization. But at the time, hard-nosed police officers like Tait were greatly admired by many of the older, conservative population of New Zealand, who saw him as taking a stance on law and order, and moral standards (Butterworth 2005: 191, 246).

Tait (1978) later states in his book, “... We had our bikies gangs in Christchurch and I was itching for a chance to get a crack at them ...” (Tait 1978: 70). He saw his chance on Sunday, the 31st December 1973, when “... about 100 people – bikies and their girl friends – drinking in that space” congregated at a rented villa at 71 Kerrs Road, in the Christchurch suburb of Linwood (Tait 1978: 71 – 74). Tait (1978) records, “They made as their headquarters a house at 71 Kerrs Road, North Linwood, in which two Epitaph Riders rented a flat ...” (Tait 1978: 71). This increasingly noisy party ultimately provoked some neighbours to telephone Police to complain about the noise and behaviours (Tait 1978: 71-74).

Tait states in his book that he had always had a preference for operationally deploying ‘tough cops’ in these circumstances, so he had the property placed under constant surveillance “by a posse of mobile police” (Tait 1978: 71). He states, “... there was also a tendency for some of the immature police and traffic officers to become too friendly with the goons on bikes. Some of the police had to be disciplined for actually agreeing to

transport some of the bikies' gear in police cars ..." (Tait 1978: 71). For "immature," read many younger police officers of the day, and those older officers who did not buy into the style of policing that was being attempted at Kerrs Road that night.

I was present (as a young trainee detective) as the Kerrs Road saga unfolded, working alongside an older experienced detective. We were both becoming increasingly concerned at what we were seeing developing, so both diplomatically attempted to argue through a more senior detective officer for the systematic taking of statements from the neighbours who were complaining at that time, before any action was taken. But our advice fell on deaf ears, so we watched the drama unfold with the knowledge that we would have to clean up afterwards. Tear-gas was deployed (which, according to Tait, was a first in such circumstances), followed by 85 police and five police dogs (Tait 1978: 72, 74). There was not unexpectedly considerable damage done to property, and some injuries on both sides before seventy-seven 'bikies' and four female associates were arrested for unlawful assembly (Tait 1978: 74). The inevitable happened however, as when uniformed officers and detectives were belatedly sent in to try and shore up the prosecution case by attempting to obtain statements from the complainants of the night, they no longer wanted to be involved. Those arrested were initially convicted by a magistrate of unlawful assembly, but were all subsequently acquitted on appeal by the Supreme Court (Tait 1978: 74). Tait (1978: 74) argued that the case was ultimately lost because of a legal technicality, but in my opinion, the case was also considerably weakened by the perceived lack of justification for the police to have taken such a heavy-handed response. Tait argues, "The Police had won. The moral victory came out on the road that night of 31 December. This time the bikies had defied the police and lost" (Tait 1978: 74). Tait claims in his book that his actions that night "won widespread approval from the New Zealand public," and from some Members of Parliament (Tait 1974: 74). Certainly there were sections of the police, particularly older members, who publicly and privately applauded Tait's actions that night, and bemoaned a shift to a newer style of police in the years to come (Butterworth 2005: 191). But I know from some critical and disparaging comment that I heard on the night,

and during later discussions, that many more liberal police officers were left with a strong and unsettling disquiet that we were seeing a style of policing that did not jell with what was being done at that time to modernise a very staid, and conservative policing organization.

Butterworth (2005) described Tait as “a pantomime demon for the protest groups”, and made the following observation:

... Tait was in many ways an old-fashioned country policeman, with the virtues and faults of his type: honest, according to his lights, energetic and dogmatically certain of the distinction between right and wrong. He is still remembered as an excellent leader by some of those he commanded. However he was often overbearing and tactless, and had no awareness of the political dimension of urban policing (Butterworth 2005: 191).

The event ultimately helped to harden the resolve of the clubs to resist and survive. Many of those who were arrested at Kerrs Road that night went on to become long-term outlaw bikers. From my interaction with bikers in recent years, I believe that most New Zealand outlaw bikers today, regardless to their age and affiliation, have a collective memory about what happened at Kerrs Road that night, whether they were riding at the time, or joined their clubs later – ‘Kerrs Road,’ as it is known, has become part of New Zealand outlaw biker folklore. I recently received a telephone call late one afternoon from an old outlaw biker contact. He was obviously present at a social gathering where the Kerrs Road incident was being discussed, and had telephoned me because he was struggling to remember Tait’s name. When I reminded him, I heard him triumphantly tell others in the vicinity the name, which from the increase in the background noise obviously precipitated even more lively discussion.

Where Hollister defined the Californian ‘outlaw’ biker, I would argue that Kerrs Road defined the New Zealand outlaw biker, particularly the southern outlaw biker. The Kerrs Road debacle (arguably confirmed by Tait’s rationalisation of his motivation on the day, his expressed hatred for ‘bikie goons,’ and his distain for liberals) does perhaps lend some

validity to Veno's claim that police have the same motivation as any other 'gang' – "power and domination" (Tait 1978: 68-80, Veno 2003: 212, Butterworth 2005: 246).

Hot on the heels of Kerrs Road came a number of violent incidents involving warring outlaw clubs that occurred in Christchurch in 1974/75, closely followed by the slaying of the *Highway 61 M.C.* member, Bradley Earl Haora, by members of the Auckland *Hell's Angels* in Prospect Terrace, Auckland, in December 1975. The Christchurch incidents become the catalyst for the 1975 'Twentyman' Report to Parliament ('The Gang War in Christchurch – August 1974 – March 1975'). This comprehensive 99-page report was promulgated by the then District Commander of the Christchurch Police district, and was ultimately 'published' as an internal discussion document in April 1975 (Twentyman 1975). It dealt with 74 separate 'incidents' (in fact, incidents *and* actions) that occurred in Christchurch between the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 1974 and the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1975. The incidents increased in intensity from August 1974, and were primarily tit-for-tat skirmishes between the *Epitaph Riders M.C.* and the *Devil's Henchmen M.C.* Central to the earlier incidents were a series of violent assaults that culminated in the taking of gang patches. One unfortunate *Epitaph Rider* had his patch taken from him on two separate occasions (Twentyman Report 1975). As the incidents increased in severity, firearms were routinely discharged, with a member of the *Epitaph Rider* being seriously wounded on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1974 when he was shot in the head and lost an eye (Twentyman 1975: 12). Tensions continued to escalate until they culminated with the stabbing murder of *Devil's Henchmen* Gregory Slack by an *Epitaph Rider* in Fitzgerald Avenue, Christchurch, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1974 (Twentyman 1975: 14). Another member of the *Devils Henchmen* was shot and seriously wounded in Lincoln Road the following month in a wild public shootout, followed by a number of other serious incidents, including aggravated assaults, and the arson of the *Devils Henchmen M.C.*'s clubhouse in Convoy Street, New Brighton (after several earlier attempts) on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1975 (Twentyman 1975: 15). 'The Twentyman Report' received its first public airing when it was produced as a "special dossier" by the then Crown Prosecutor, Neil Williamson, during sentencing arguments in



the Christchurch Supreme Court on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1975 (*Christchurch Star*, April 19, 1975). On several occasions during court appearances and trials throughout this period, Stipendiary Magistrates and Judges made observations from the bench about the 'bikie gangs' that were immediately picked up by the media as headlines – "Gang attack like Chicago in 30s – SM" (*Christchurch Star* 24 December 1974), "Gang violence senseless, vicious – Judge" (*Christchurch Star* February 11, 1975), "Clashes 'almost tribal' – SM," (*Christchurch Star*, February 15, 1975: 2). In fact, the environment was similar to that described by Cohen (2002) during the 'rescue and remedy' stage during the mods and rockers moral panic in the United Kingdom in 1964/65 (Cohen 2002: 66-89).

Political and public debate about these and earlier highly publicised incidents resulted in public, police and opportunist politicians regularly calling for the introduction of draconian anti-gang legislation (Tait 1978: 68). This heightened public awareness, largely due to graphic media coverage, resulted in a more proactive policing response to outlaw biker clubs that continued well into the 1990s, and is periodically revisited today. 'Gang Liaison officers' were appointed, and operational police staff were encouraged to proactively engage with gang members, whenever appropriate. Many of the subsequent court trials, as was the practice of the day, were covered in the local and national daily newspapers, and key aspects were covered on television news programmes. Name suppression was not a common practice in the 70s, and the police were not coy in identifying the defendant's association with 'gangs' in their arguments for individuals to be remanded in custody, or when pressing for bail restrictions and non-association clauses. This media coverage gave outlaw motorcycle clubs a very high profile right across New Zealand, regardless of whether there were outlaw biker clubs in the area or not. For a period in the mid 70s, outlaw clubs attracted the same adverse reaction from the public of New Zealand, via the New Zealand mass media, as did the earlier moral panic about juvenile delinquency in New Zealand in the mid 50s (Yska 1993: 58-84). But as Veno (2003) observed, adverse publicity actually attracts new members, so there was no shortage of prospects by the end of 1975 (Veno 2003: 15). As an Angel observed to Thompson

(1966), "... you almost *have* (emphasis mine) to join a club. If you don't, you'll never be accepted anywhere. If you don't wear any colours, you're sort of in between – and you're nothing" (Thompson 1966: 83).

The New Zealand Criminologists Jane Kelsey and Warren Young, in their (1982) report, 'The Gangs: Moral Panic as Social Control,' argue that the Police are agents of social control, and have two primary functions – law enforcement and crime prevention (Kelsey and Young 1982: 49–50). Kelsey and Young (1982) primarily addressed the period 1978 to early 1980, but make particular reference to 1979 as, "... the year of the gangs..." (Kelsey and Young 1982: 1). Their primary focus was on ethnic or street gangs, rather than on the 'outlaw' motorcycle 'gangs,' but they do make reference to the earlier 'gangs,' quoting the then Commissioner Bob Walton's *Annual Report to Parliament* in 1979 in which he stated, "... Gangs are not a recent phenomenon, and in the past decade it was mainly motorcycle gangs that attracted police attention. Last year saw the rise of Maori gangs involved in confrontations with other Maori gangs" (Kelsey and Young, 1982: 52). Walton went on to make a particularly significant observation, when he argued, "... the gang problem cannot be eliminated by force." (Kelsey and Young 1982: 52).

Kelsey and Young (1982), in their analysis of the 'gang crisis' of 1979, argued, "... The level of gang activity was seen (sic) to rise and fall in a way which gave a reassuring picture of crime and its control" (Kelsey and Young 134). They went on to observe, "... in this way the gang issue was taken totally out of context. Gangs were singled out as a special problem, and became a widely publicised issue of major public concern, sometimes to the point of monopolising the news media coverage" (Kelsey and Young 135). They go on to make an observation that is very applicable to the situation that the outlaw clubs found themselves in during the early to mid 70s when they argue, "... once this artificial picture had been created, the actual frequency or seriousness of gang offending became unimportant" (Kelsey and Young 1982: 135). Kelsey and Young (1982) make a particularly pertinent observation when they argue:

This public picture of gang behaviour was largely built up by the media. It was based on dramatic and sensationalised stories of gang offending which were frequently inaccurate and one-sided. Major themes appeared which centred mainly around violence and the need for law and order; these themes then determined both the number and content of later reports of gang activity. Secondary and background news items which linked the gang problem to other social issues causing concern, such as unemployment or racial discontent, almost always talked about gangs in terms of this negative stereotype...In their presentation of news about the gangs the media depended greatly, however, on their regular sources, and in particular on the police and the courts. The attention of reporters and editors had been gradually attracted by stories of isolated gang incidents. These became more potent pieces of "news", however, when they came out at the same time as, or were accompanied by, statements of concern from politicians, police, courts, or other reputable public speakers... In retrospect, it is clear that the actions of various official agencies were guided by the need to control and overcome a public concern which they themselves had played a major role in shaping ... (Kelsey and Young 1982: 135-36).

There is a current campaign in New Zealand that is being driven by the *New Zealand Police Association* to pressure politicians and the New Zealand Police executive to 'deal to' gangs' (*Police News*, April 2006: 66). This was an unfortunate choice of words, as in New Zealand street vernacular, 'dealing to' means physically assaulting someone! This anti-gang rhetoric is now a regular mantra from this powerful lobby group, but the timing of the current calls are interesting, as it coincides with probably the worst press that the New Zealand Police have ever received, so it is not too cynical to suggest that such calls are an attempt to distract police members and the public of New Zealand from the bad press that the New Zealand Police have experienced over the past two to three years, that has recently culminated in a series of high profile criminal trials of serving and former police officers who were charged with individual and pack rapes, and other very serious criminal allegations. This regular posturing about gangs is always played out in the mass media, and is often directly linked to political lobbying and personal agendas (Tait 1978: 68 - 70, Butterworth 2005: 246, Laws 2006). Kelsey and Young (1982) argue:

... this is not to suggest that the police response to the gangs has necessarily been promoted by sinister and ulterior motives; but it is to maintain that their reaction, which was sometime variable and ambiguous in its objectiveness, formed an integral part of the public panic over gang behaviour (Kelsey and Young 1982: 49).

It is possible to argue that some police officers and their representatives (and sometimes the Police Executive itself) use the mass media today for their own ends (Butterworth 2005: 246). This prompted lawyer Marie Dyhrberg recently to comment, “The police should not be allowed to get away with introducing, by press release, fundamental changes to the way policing is conducted here” (*NZPA*, Saturday 13 May 2006). The reality is that all commissioned officers of police in New Zealand are employed on performance based contracts, so there are often performance measures to be met, and public profiles to be enhanced and maintained by ambitious officers competing for higher rank in a flattened organization structure with limited opportunities for advancement. Therefore a periodic climate of moral panic, and the victimization of a segment of society that has little political clout (and who are seen by many as deviant) results, as we have seen from the evidence, in a high media profile for those involved over several days, until the public become tired of the story. It is during times of pressure like this that police and outlaw bikers are in the greatest conflict (Tait 1978: 68-75, Veno 2003: 50-1, 189, 258, 265-7). It is at these times that lobbyists make calls for greater resources and the introduction of yet more draconian legislation.

My argument is essentially that outlaw motorcycle ‘gangs’ are always positioned as significant potential ‘folk devils’ for law enforcement to exploit when the opportunity arises; the ‘usual suspects’ that remain very important to an international law enforcement juggernaut that relentlessly strives for even more power and authority in an increasingly global law enforcement world. And it goes without saying therefore, that law enforcement organizations can provide a powerful platform for individual and collective personal agendas. A recent example is the moral panic that has been generated in recent years about the alleged rampant use of the powerful new variation of methamphetamine, known as ‘P’ or ‘Pure’ (*New Zealand Police Association* 2003: 36, 9, pp. 146-7, 2004: 37, 7, pp. 138-9, 2005: 38, 1, 12-14, 2005a: 38, 3, 50-52, Zander 2002: 14-19, Little, 2003: 16-21).

Whilst the period of police inspired moral panic may offer short-term solutions, and dubious gains, they ultimately strengthen the clubs that survive them. Veno (2003) notes that clubs change visibility and tactics as police put them under the spotlight (Veno 2003: 263). He quotes a member of the *Finks M.C.*, who observed that the club “thrived on the increasingly us against them notion of society - ...the harder it gets, it brings on the camaraderie, he said” Veno 2003: 263). As a result of the perceived omni-present threat from police and ‘the law,’ outlaw motorcycle clubs that are actively involved in criminal activity today tend to adopt protective cell type structures, where messages are passed down to rank and file members (and back up the chain) through key mid-level individuals who act as ‘cut-offs’ within the club (Veno 2003: 71). The Sergeant at Arms is often the most vulnerable of the ‘patched’ club members because of his role as the club armourer, ‘fixer’ and enforcer (Veno 2003: 96 – 7). From time-to-time, strategically aligned, subservient ‘feeder’ clubs are used by the more deviant clubs to carry out violent acts against opposing clubs, as was evident in the violent *Hell’s Angels – Rock Machine* war that occurred in Quebec between 1994 – 2002, where reputedly in excess of 160 persons were murdered (Lavigne 1999: 62; Veno 2003: 16–17, 96–97, 100). These buffering exercises are specifically designed to distance the club executive (and therefore ‘the club’) from conspiracy prosecutions, and to protect club assets from subsequent ‘proceeds of crime’ investigation which can result in the court ordering a seizure of assets if it is determined they were obtained as the result of criminal activity (Veno 2003: 71). From my many discussions with my participants, it is evident that most outlaw clubs are very conscious of the prevailing legislation that relates to gangs, and are very knowledgeable about the various investigative options that are open to law enforcement agencies. However, OMCs are regularly reminded of their vulnerability by the increasing number of published accounts of bikers from the more deviant end of the outlaw biker world who have ultimately had to make a choice, and opted to cooperate with law enforcement (Lavigne 1996, Martineau and Murray 2003, Paradis 2002, Sanger 2005, Wethern 1978). Informants and defectors are an anathema to clubs – those who ultimately cooperate with

law enforcement are contemptuously dismissed by embedded outlaws such as Sonny Barger, who devoted a chapter ('Rats, Infil - Traitors and Government Informants') to them in his sanitised biography (Barger and Zimmerman 2001: 229 - 237). However, turncoat informants remain the greatest threat to any OMC that continues to engage in serious criminal activity (Lavigne 1999: 45,46, 54 -6, 62, 71 - 2, 83, 97, 99, Veno 2003: 193 - 5, 206 - 7).

### 3. **Conclusion:**

In sum, the periods of internecine gang warfare that precipitate a period of moral panic may be very beneficial for law enforcement agencies, as they provide opportunities for the police executive, their service organizations, and individual police commanders (and opportunistic local and national politicians), to publicly contest for greater policing resources, and to lobby for new, enhanced legislative powers to 'deal with the gangs.'

Whilst the foundation South Island OMCs of the day were not directly referencing international mass media images of outlaw bikers, they were interested in the mass media representations of their subculture, and did relate to the 'ideal' image of an outlaw biker that was represented by Sonny Barger, and the Californian (and by default, the Auckland, New Zealand chapter of the *Hell's Angels M.C.* This was not just a visual influence, as they were also interested in reading about how the *Hell's Angels M.C.* saw the world, as we saw in the previous chapter. The outlaw bikers took what they wanted from the mass media, but arguably they were more influenced by grounded events, such as their contestation with others, including the police, than they were by popular culture and the mass media. But the international and regional mass media representations of outlaw bikers were influential in how the greater community (and law enforcement) saw the subculture, which has created stereotypes that remain to this day. Two of the more influential print and visual images were Hunter S. Thompson's (1966) *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga*, and the 1969 film *Easy Rider*. Thompson's book was influential because he successfully captured the essence of what the outlaw biker lifestyle was all about, and articulated the underlying ethos. It also prompted subsequent exposes of

the lifestyle by other elements of the international mass media. *Easyrider* was influential because it captured the essence of the 'outlaw' motorcycle, and transformed it into a metaphor for freedom and the open road.

As Cohen (2002), Critcher (2003), Turner (2000, 2006) et al argued, the mass media plays a significant role in how societies perceive subcultures, particular where moral panic ensues. The warring Christchurch OMCs of the early – mid 1970s arguably become highly visible by the actions and pronouncements of local and national politicians, and regional moral entrepreneurs, such as Tait, which arguably resulted in forms sub-cultural resistance which reinforces Thornton's (1996) contention about the complex interplay between subcultures and mass media, and the cultural credibility that is derived from such hostile media coverage, "... whereas mainstream media approval spells the death of subcultures..." (Brake 1985, Thornton 1996: 122 –136, Turner 2006: 401).

What did harden the resolve of the South Island outlaw bikers to stay the course was their regular interaction with their northern counterparts, the Kerrs Road debacle, the internecine bikers war that was fought on the streets of Christchurch in 1974/5, and the adverse mass media attention and the moral panic that ensued. They survived and flourished because of the male bonding that resulted from their exposure to violence, loss, retribution, resistance, camaraderie, isolation, survival and consolidation, as well as their genuine passion for motorcycles and motorcycling, and a healthy lust for life. The media representations of the outlaw bikers that were largely fuelled by the police set in motion a chain of events that actually strengthened the clubs, and ensured their ultimate survival in often hostile environments (Veno 2003: 15, 188-9).

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusion

#### **(Or, just what impact did the international mass media have on the early ‘outlaw’ biker subculture in New Zealand?)**

“... hope I die before I get old”.

Line from the song *My Generation* (1965),  
written by Pete Townsend of ‘The Who.’

“... I hope I die before I become Pete Townsend”.

A diary rant by Kurt Cobain of the ‘grunge’ band *Nirvana*,  
written sometime before he suicided in 1994.  
*Kurt Cobain: Journals* (2002)

This thesis set out to establish ‘how’ (the extent to which) international film, literature, media reports and photographic images (circa 1950 – 1975) have influenced the generic identity adopted by ‘outlaw’ motorcycle clubs in New Zealand. Outlaw motorcycle clubs represent many things to many people. To some they represent deviance and anarchy, whilst to others they represent freedom and the open road. The emergence of outlaw motorcycle clubs in the South Island of New Zealand was not a regional aberration. Globally, the outlaw clubs that emerged in the 1960s/early 70s were established by individuals with a genuine interest in motorcycles, and with more than a passing nod to their assorted motorcycling forebears (Thompson 1966, Harris 1985, Veno 2003). For New Zealand OMCs, these earlier influences range from the pre-war generation of New Zealand motorcycle enthusiasts, to the later, more ‘deviant’ milk-bar cowboys of the 50s, and ‘rockers’ of the early to mid 60s.

Certainly, the international mass media representations of the sub-culture did have a considerable impact upon the early South Island outlaw clubs, but it is evident that no one image or account of OMC activity was more influential than any other in the evolution of the subculture in New Zealand. Whilst the establishment of the Auckland chapters of the



*Hell's Angels M.C.* in the north of the North Island of New Zealand in July of 1961 did provide an early New Zealand example of how an outlaw biker should look and behave, most of my participants considered that they were more influenced by media representations of Sonny Barger and the Californian *Hell's Angels M.C.* in the construction of their generic OMC template. It should be noted that there had been individual hardcore bikers and small groups of unnamed (and loosely 'named') '1%er' or renegade bikers riding in various parts of a country since the 1950s, alongside the robust, long standing, main-stream recreational motorcycling culture that had existed in New Zealand since the 1920s (Veno 2003: 29-31, 40-41).

Much has been written about the impact that 'the Hollister incident and 'biker' films such as *The Wild One* and *Easy Rider* had on the subculture, and the many other sub-cultural representations that I have already traversed in this thesis. Certainly, the international mass media was hugely influential in transmitting these representations around the globe, but again, these images were not solely the catalyst for the formation of the outlaw motorcycle clubs that were established in the South Island in the 60s and 70s. But the international mass media representations of post-war youth culture were undoubtedly influential in offering representations of what a biker should look like, and how he should act. The international mass media offered style options, and as Hebdige argues, 'style' was more important than anything else to post-war youth culture (Hebdige 1979: 84 –89, Hall and Jefferson 1993: 87 – 88). It also demonstrated that the powerful motorcycle was an ideal vehicle for the outlaw biker, a mechanical steed to replace the equine version ridden by an earlier group of 'outlaw' anti-heroes. As a dominant or 'key symbol', the large, powerful customised 'outlaw' motorcycle embodied almost everything that the male dominated sub-culture required. It exuded masculinity, had the real potential for physical risk (so was generally regarded as dangerous and somewhat deviant by parents), and was being increasingly projected in the mass media of the day as a metaphor for deviance, freedom and the open road (Turner 1967: 20, 30-1, Ortner 2002: 159). It is also important to remember that the purchase of a motorcycle was achievable for the young men of the

day, who tended to have rather limited financial resources. It was also less attractive to the majority of the mainstream, older generation, who tended to gravitate to more practical modes of transport, which enhanced its appeal to the young and the reckless. But then, the motorcycle is not just about transportation. It was about fun, hedonism, freedom, and the open road, and all of the other clichés that are still used today to sell motorcycles to an increasingly affluent motorcycling fraternity, who make their conscious to purchase against their knowledge of the physical risks involved in motorcycling. Most of my participants report that they were often forced to learn basic motorcycle mechanics to enable them to keep their machines on the road, given the cost of imported parts and skilled labour in the 60s and 70s, which provided them with a greater insight into the qualities and foibles of their machine. As my participants observed, it was this shared interest in motorcycles that was more influential in bonding a biker to his like-minded brothers than anything else in those early days. And, as their knowledge about their subculture increased, and their mechanical expertise grew, so did their ability to customise their machines to make them individual extensions of their own and their group identity.

Boundaries were marked as clubs set out to establish their collective identity within a symbolically constructed community, which was always relational to the ‘significant others’ in the greater community (Cohen 1985, Moore 2003, Okely 1983). This construction is symbolised by the wearing of their club patch “which openly declares a kind of sub-cultural ethnicity”, which regularly leads to conflict with others, if the outsider group is challenged, or if boundaries are breached (Moore 2003:11, 3). As with all sub-cultures, the rituals and symbols of outlaw bikers, like any other marginal group, articulate themselves through, “stylistic expressions, which are original, creative and self-aware” (Moore 2003: 11,3 – 4). These symbols are multi-vocal, so are readily understood both by insiders and outsiders, which again reinforces sub-cultural boundaries (Turner 1967: 50, 52, Okely 1983: 77 – 78, Cohen 1985: 39 – 40). ‘Insiders’ become insiders because they willingly embrace the rules and mores of their particular society, and by this acceptance, apparently reject many of the mores and strictures of the greater society. This explains the

heavily ritualised nature of outlaw motorcycle clubs where risk, such as illicit drug taking, casual sex, criminality, violence, and powerful motorcycles considerably enhance this experience, which again helps to establish real and imagined boundaries between the marginalised group and the greater society (Anderson 1983, Lupton, 1999, Lyng 2005, Moore 2003: 11,3). But it should be noted that members of 'outlaw' club members in the late 60s and early 70s were generally not as actively involved in criminality as some of the 'outlaw' clubs would later become. And that then, as now, not all of the '1%er' or 'outlaw' bikers actively engage in serious criminal offending (Veno 2003: 59, 187 – 9).

The South Island of New Zealand was still a rather sparsely populated region in the 1950s and 60s, but New Zealand was actively engaged in the global world, via its then rather enthusiastic membership of the British Commonwealth, and via an increasingly globalised mass media. New Zealanders of all ages are recognised as being avid consumers of visual and print media, and younger New Zealanders have always actively followed overseas music and style trends (Yska 1993: 142-43). Although geographically isolated, post-war New Zealand had a healthy and robust domestic mass media apparatus, and despite austerity measures, permitted the importation of a wide range of books, magazines, and comics. Some communities were also able to tap into the first hand experience of new immigrants, who often brought representations of contemporary youth culture with them when they emigrated to New Zealand, particularly those from the UK, which was heavily influenced at that time by American film and music. New Zealand was already very familiar with American style, music and film, which had been enhanced by the presence of American GIs during WWII. The introduction of television into New Zealand in 1964 further exposed the population to a range of ideas that emanated from the United Kingdom, Europe and the Americas, albeit they were invariably delivered in the rather stilted, conservative style of the day.

But New Zealand in the 50s and for much of the sixties was also inclined to be a rather staid and conservative country that tended to close at the weekends. By the mid 1960s,

there was a growing sense of frustration and restlessness amongst New Zealand youth as they were increasingly exposed to international images of British and American youth culture, which resulted in schisms developing between the older generation of New Zealanders (who had experienced WWII and the post-war austerity measures, and therefore tended to covet the peace and quiet that New Zealand then offered), and their restless offspring, many of whom found conservative, largely rural New Zealand terminally boring. So New Zealand youth took to making their own fun, which often brought them into conflict with their parents, and at times, the authorities. These activities including a growing interest in motorcycles, which even then, were a metaphor for freedom and the open-road.

Whilst elements of the now truly global outlaw motorcycle club subculture were in existence in other parts of the world at the time, and were known to the early members of the South Island OMCs, it was arguably largely local issues and local conditions that helped shape them into the clubs that we see today. Whilst South Island OMCs followed the international OMC template by embracing British and American motorcycles and emulated the American representations of OMC clothing, rituals and symbols, it was arguably their interaction with their significant others that ultimately shaped their generic identity, which was firmly established by the end of 1975 (Boon 1982: 6, 25 Cohen 1985: 115 – 118).

Peterson (2003) observed that anthropology, “like many other social sciences”, is struggling to come to terms with the social world in the age of globalisation (Peterson 2003: 15). He goes on to observe that an emerging anthropology of mass media was taking note of the role of the mass media in the construction of identities (Peterson 2003: 56). As Spitulnik (1993) observed, mass media in some form or another have touched most societies, because the globalisation of the mass media has engaged us all in media rituals and social dramas as we consume mediated events (Spitulnik 1993: 294). Peterson (2003) reminds us that the social ritual approach to mass media derives from the work of Victor

Turner (Turner 1969, Peterson 2003: 240). Giddens (1990) emphasises that relations between the global and the local are always dialectical (Giddens 1990: 64, Peterson 2003: 266). As Peterson (2003) argues, globalisation is essentially about the connections between localities and the ways these connections influence one another (Peterson 2003: 266). His argument is essentially “the local” never ceases to exist in globalisation (Peterson 2003: 266). In other words, regardless to the global product, there will always be a local construction placed up its consumption, which the sociologists refer to as ‘glocalization’ (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 2000: 155). Two well-known examples of glocalization cited in this thesis are the evolution of Trobriand cricket, and Daniel Miller’s ‘Coca Cola: a black sweet drink from Trinidad (Kildea and Leach 1976, Miller 1998). Peterson (2003) cites Liebes and Katz (1994) when he observes that the viewing of an American television show (*Dallas*) in America is not the same as viewing it in Israel, “while a Moroccan viewing differs from both of these” (Peterson 2003: 19). Therefore, international mass media images of aspects the outlaw motorcycle subculture are not necessarily going to be arbitrarily adopted by bikers in other parts of the world without question, or without reason. The representation must have some relevance to the symbolic construction of their respective outlaw biker communities, which were defined by reference to a ‘significant other,’ “... likewise, ‘self-conscious cultures’ and communities” (Boon 1982: 6, 25, Okely 1983: 77 – 78, Cohen 1985: 115 - 118). How these mass media representations are consumed will differ from biker to biker, location to location (Veno 2003: 188). Like any other subculture, those viewing the images will take from them what they want, and reject what is not relevant or applicable to their connection with their subculture, and their local conditions. It can be argued therefore, that some writings and images were far more influential in the establishment and consolidation of the sub-culture in some parts of the world than others, and that they do not provide a universal template for a complex subculture that has now existed internationally for well over fifty years. But it can also be argued, that international mass media representations of outlaw bikers have been hugely influential on how other may see them.

OMCs were active in the South Island from the late 1960s, and came into increasing conflict with the police during the early 70s. This was at a time of social change, where progressive elements in the New Zealand police fought to modernise a rather antiquated, resistant policing apparatus, that was struggling to deliver a contemporary policing response to an increasingly restless New Zealand born population of baby-boomers who just wanted to have fun (Tait 1978: 69, Yska 1993: 58-84), Butterworth 2005: 191). This uneasy relationship between old-style policing and the usual suspects of the 1970s – the “gangs” and the “bikies”, culminated in a rather heavy-handed police response to “bikie” disorder that occurred at the Alexander Blossom festival in 1972 and 1973, and in the subsequent decision to arrest seventy-seven bikers and four female associates for unlawful assembly at Kerrs Road, Christchurch on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 1973 (Twentyman Report 1975, Tait 1978: 74). These two incidents occurred during a well-documented period of moral panic in New Zealand about youth sub-cultures (Tait 1978: 68 – 74, Cohen 2002, Butterworth 2005). Whilst these hardline policing operations were designed to suppress the clubs, arguably they in fact hardened the resolve of those who opted to remain involved in the subculture, and helped to solidify the boundary between OMCs and the police (Veno 2003: 189). As Veno (2003) observed, adverse publicity attracts new members, and is instrumental in facilitating the resolve of the more hardcore clubs to engage in forms of sub-cultural resistance in order to survive and flourish (Veno 2003: 15).

But I would argue that the pivotal event that ultimately consolidated the subculture in the South Island was the internecine gang warfare that broke out between the pre-existing Christchurch based *Epitaph Riders M.C.*, and the emergent Christchurch chapter of the *Devil's Henchmen M.C.*, in 1974 – 75. The *Epitaph Riders* had been in existence since 1969, whilst the *Devil's Henchmen* were generally younger bikers, although some were graduates from earlier short-lived ‘clubs’. This no-hold-barred, all-out biker war was fought between August 1974 – March 1975, and ultimately resulted in a homicide, several violent random attacks on bikers (and police) in public places, wild shootouts where bikers suffered serious gunshot and miscellaneous injuries, and the arson of club houses. This

biker 'war' which became a national spectacle, ultimately resulted in the promulgation of *The Twentyman Report* ('The Gang War in Christchurch: August 1974 to March 1975'), which was 'published' in April 1975. These events considerably enhanced the profiles of both clubs (which survive to this day), bonded the original participant members to their clubs and to each other, and created a national focus on "the gangs," which I would argue, was largely responsible for the public profile that established OMCs had in the South Island by the end of 1975 (Tait 1978: 68 – 75).

So, whilst outlaw clubs have been influenced by the representations of OMCs in the global mass media, their South Island New Zealand OMC communities are a local construction that conform in general to an international template, but were and are all influenced by environmental factors. Sub-cultural communities are most influenced by their greater community, so they are an indicator of the ability of the greater society to accept 'the other.' This is obviously a rather simplistic observation, as there are many other influences that will impact upon such sub-cultures, but deviance needs to be considered in context with the time and place, so how the particular sub-culture is perceived by the greater society, particularly how threatening it is to them, arguably dictates how they position themselves, and how they view 'others.' Sub-cultures that start out as a youth culture generally need to emerge in a society where there is a degree of tolerance.

Arguably, New Zealand was such a society, as at a crucial time in its evolution, New Zealand was experiencing social change and the impact of globalisation, which the more progressive of the elder population saw as a consequence of war, progress, and the strong sense of egalitarianism that was so strong in New Zealand in the 1950s and 60s. The 'Southern Man' model of masculinity arguably made the early South Island outlaw bikers appear less deviant than they perhaps would have been in other, more traditional urban environments. Largely, they were generally tolerated as the (reasonably) deviant, but not irrecoverable 'other.' And they themselves soon realised that they could not hope to survive as a sub-culture if they did not moderate their behaviours, and remained connected to their greater society, albeit as members of intentional communities ostensibly choosing

to live 'at the margins' as outlaw bikers. So, many chose to carefully balance their club life with their 'straight' life, and engage with their greater community in the workplace, on the sporting field, during recreational pursuits, or through the socialisation experienced in small, strong communities, where community values are espoused. They were therefore generally never truly anonymous 'outlaw' bikers, or ever positioned at the extreme margins for any significant period.

The outlaw bikers that participated in, and are discussed in this thesis are not necessarily representative of all contemporary outlaw bikers, as times change, and the motivations of those who engage in sub-cultures change with the times, but several of my participants are still actively involved in the OMC scene, which remains an important part of their lives. Those who lived through the formative years of the OMC subculture tend to see themselves as purists, and still espouse the traditional outlaw biker values of motorcycling, biker brotherhood, and a strong sense of community as their personal central tenet, regardless of what their newer biker brothers are currently allegedly engaged in today (Veno 2003: 188). The OMC subculture has survived and flourished because of what they represent to others, more so than what they actually achieve – if their lifestyle was not attractive to others, they would have gone the way of many other youth cultures. So whilst today's outlaw clubs have refined their public persona, and to a degree have become more sophisticated, they owe a considerable debt of gratitude to the founder members that set the foundation stones that their respective outlaw biker communities were built upon.

**Word count:** Body of work 56,976 (total 66, 390)



## Notes:

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### Chapter one. Introduction

#### Pages 1 - 20 incl.

1. Some of the foundation clubs in the South Island that date back to the 1960s/70s were *The Few* (now defunct), then the *Lost Breed*. in Nelson, the *Last Reich* (later to become the *Lone Legion*.) in Blenheim, *The Apostles*, FN 99, *The Drifters*, and *The Avengers* in 60s Christchurch, before the appearance of the *Epitaph Riders M.C.* and their later nomad chapter, the Christchurch Chapter of the *Devil's Henchmen M.C.*, a southern chapter of the North Island *Highway 61 M.C.*, and for a period in the early 1970s, the more ethic *Storm Troopers*. Further south were Ashburton's side-patched *Fianna Fail M.C.*, Timaru's *Highwaymen M.C.* (now defunct), the short lived *Rebels M.C.*, before the residue of the *Highwaymen* split to become the *Devil's Henchmen M.C.* and *Road Knights M.C.* a very shorted lived (allegedly one week) club in Oamaru in the early to mid 70s, Dunedin's *Coffin Cheaters M.C.*, *Natural Sinners M.C.*, and the later *Southern Vikings M.C.*, and Invercargill's *Southland Road Runners M.C.*, the *Southland Saints M.C.*, and later the *Antarctic Angels M.C.* (now defunct), the Invercargill chapter of the *Devil's Henchmen M.C.*, the *Damned M.C.* and the *Road Knights M.C.* This list is by no way exhaustive, but records the significant earlier 'outlaw' clubs in the main centres across the South. The late 70s/early 80s saw the formation (and demise) of a number of subsequent outlaw clubs across the South Island (including the formation of the *44 South M.C.* on the Chatham Islands), successive clubs on the West Coast, and the expansion of existing clubs, as well as the folding or 'patching over' of others.
2. I say 'men' because membership of New Zealand 'outlaw' clubs today is restricted to males, although this was not always the case (Ferris 1995, Veno 2003: 41, 71, 164 - 165). But females can and often do have important roles behind the scenes in various support functions (Veno 2003: 150 - 165). My participants talk of females riding with both the *Epitaph Riders* and the Christchurch chapters of the *Devil's Henchmen* in the early 70s. Allegedly, the two females who rode with the *Epitaph Riders* were patched.
3. The '1%er' reference relates to the alleged "1%" of motorcyclists that the *American Motorcycle Association* publicly disowned after the 1947 'Hollister riot.' At the time, the AMA argued, "only 1 per cent of motorcyclists are hoodlums and troublemakers" (Thompson 1966: 17 - 18; Harris 1985: 19; Veno [2002] 2003: 28). As a response to this snub, many fully patched members of 'outlaw' clubs now choose to sport a small rhombus-shaped patch on their club colours with '1%' or '1%er' inside, or similar tattoos to denote their deliberate identification with this 'motorcycle outlaw' label. Thompson (1966) quotes a Hell's Angel, "speaking for the permanent record", as saying, "...We're the one percenters, man - the one percent that don't fit and don't care ...We're royalty among motorcycle outlaws, baby" (Thompson 1966: 14).
4. *Justice in Ontario* is based on an incident that occurred in a bar in East London, Ontario, Canada in 1978, which allegedly involved members of the *Satan's Choice M.C.* The incident and subsequent trial is the subject of a book written by Mich Lowe, *Conspiracy of Brothers: A True Story of Murder, Bikers and the Law*

(1989), which debates the possibility of being found guilty purely 'by association' with others in this 'deviant' group.

5. One of my older ex-outlaw-biker contacts likes to refer to me as 'Z Z Cop,' in recognition of my long, grey, 'Z Z Top' (sic) style goatee beard, and my former police career!
6. Most of these officers appeared to have the ability to deal with the individual rather than the generic stereotype, in a policing environment that tends to favour a stereotypical generic approach to the collective grouping. A handful of these officers impressed as having a very good understanding of the sub-culture, which arguably gave them the ability to take the 'cultural perspective' when interacting with 'outlaw' bikers. I would argue that specialist individuals with this sort of superior insight are particularly valuable to law enforcement agencies, as these police officers often have the ability to maintain professional strategic relationships with senior members of outlaw clubs. In my experience, these strategic relationships are of considerable benefit to both organizations at times of pressure, as they open up potential lines of communication that can be invaluable in defusing tensions between clubs, and in reducing public fears and anxieties. Sadly, the *New Zealand Police* has an abysmal track record of retaining the few officers who have proven their ability to operate with this level insight in this specialist area of policing.

## Chapter two: Anthropology, the Media and Groups at the Margins

### Pages 21 – 35 incl.

1. In 1966 Andy Warhol chose to replicate this now rather quaint image of youthful rebellion for his now famous 'Marlon' portrait that became a popular image in gay culture. This leather biker, S & M imagery was also appropriated for Kenneth Anger's (1963) cult movie with a rock 'n' roll score, *Scorpio Rising*. Thompson (1966) claims that when the film was shown in San Francisco in 1964, the theatre used a sidewalk montage of *Hell's Angel* newspaper clippings to advertise the film, which resulted in a number of Angels making 'a pilgrimage to check it out' (Thompson 1966: 95). He records that the Angels were not angry, but genuinely offended. Thompson quotes an Angel, Frenchy, as saying, "Hell, I liked the film ... but it didn't have anything to do with us. We all enjoyed it. But then we came outside and saw all those clippings about us, pasted up like advertisements. Man, it was a bummer, it wasn't right. A lot of people got conned, and now we have to listen to all this crap about us being queers" (Thompson 1966: 95). This homoerotic theme was again revisited William Friedkin's (1980) crime movie, *Cruising*, which starred Al Pacino. Perhaps one of the latest examples is the cover of an American gay erotica anthology, *The Wildest Ones: Hot Biker Tales*, edited by M. Christian, published by Starbooks Press in October 2005. The lurid cover carries a photograph of the naked upper torso of a muscular, moustached, pierced, tattooed 'gay' male (identical to the *Village People* biker character), wearing a Brando ('Johnny') *The Wild One* type 'biker' cap, circa 1953.
2. Some other papers that I have identified as being applicable include Simpson's (2000) paper 'Streets, Sidewalks, Stores, and Stories: Narrative and Uses of Urban Space,' Vigil's (2003) 'Urban Violence and Street Gangs,' and Drewery's (2003) 'Skulls, Wings & Outlaws – Motorcycle Club Insignia & Cultural Identity.'

### Chapter Three: Post-War Culture, the Visual and Print Media, and the Evolution of an International 'Outlaw' Motorcycle Sub-culture

#### Pages 36 – 49 incl.

1. Whilst some US biker clubs argue that they had an earlier formal club identity (the *Outlaws M.C.* claim they were established in the township of McCook, just outside of Chicago, in 1935), it was arguably the media coverage of the collective behaviour of those at Hollister that largely transformed the rowdy bikers present into the archetypal 'outlaw' biker image that remains to this day in the collective memory as the personification of biker deviance (as well as fostering the many other clichés and myths that continue to surround members of outlaw motorcycle gangs). The 'outlaw' tag was complete when the *American Motorcyclist's Association (AMA)* subsequently made their now famous '1%er' claim the following year, in reference to those that they considered brought motorcycling into disrepute.
2. According to Californian *Hell's Angel* Ralph 'Sonny' Barger (2000), some of those credited with instigating the rioting, a loose knit group of rowdy bikers who called themselves 'The-Pissed-off Bastards of Bloomington' went on to become founder members of the 'Berdoo' (or San Bernardino) *Hell's Angels M.C.* Barger claimed, "According to Vic Bettencourt (sic), the first Hell's Angels motorcycle club was formed around 1948 in Berdoo (San Bernardino), an offshoot from the renegade group called the Pissed Off Bastards out of Fontana, California. It was right after the Hollister incident. WWII vets from Berdoo – who belonged to the Pissed Off Bastards – used to roar by on their bikes. People would look up and say, "There goes one of those Hell's Angels ..." (Barger 2000: 30-1). Veno (2003) put the date at 17 March 1948, and argues, "There were other renegade clubs across the United States at the time, including the Booze Fighters (sic), however this first chapter of the Hell's Angels in San Bernardino, California, is regarded as the first outlaw club to have a formal organisational structure and a constitution with by-laws" (Veno 2003: 29).
3. Reynolds (2000), Garson (2003), Hayes (2005), et al, all identify various pivotal dates that they argue are significant in the evolution of the 'outlaw biker clubs. Reynolds argues the *13 Rebels*, a loose-knit group of pre-war motorcyclists, which considerably pre-dates the *Pissed Off Bastards of Bloomington* (1945 – 1946) and the *Boozefighters M.C.* (1946), were perhaps the immediately forerunners of 'outlaw' motorcycle clubs (Hayes 2005: 94; 139; Reynolds 2000: 39). Hayes (2005: 139) claims that the *13 Rebels* were in fact formed in the 1920s by a group of movie stunt men, known as 'The Yellow Jackets,' and argues the *Orange County MC* also predate the *Boozefighters* (Hayes 2005: 139). Reynolds (2000) observes, 'The 13 Rebels were not an outlaw club per se, as the term "motorcycle outlaw" did not exist in the public lexicon prior to World-war II, a time when motorcycling had none of the stigmas it would develop later (Reynolds 2000: 32). "There have been motorcycle clubs in one form or another as long as there have been motorcycles," says Dave Nichols, editor of the biker magazine, *Easyriders*.' This is a very valid distinction, as a recently published history of the Christchurch, New Zealand *Corsair Club* (circa 1925 – 1994), records that a 'member of the motorcycle section' (*Corsair Motorcycle Club Inc.*), that was formed in 1928, suggested that it should be known as the 'Pirate Club.' This suggestion was rejected by the club executive, "because it would have clashed with a Dunedin football club," but 'Pirate' plates that were affixed along the front fender of motorcycles at that time are recorded as appearing on a few members motorcycles soon afterwards. A circular 'Skull and Cross-bones motif' that later appeared on club notes, circa 1932, inside the legend 'Christchurch Corsair Club' is

remarkably similar in style to the central imagery that we now see in today's 'outlaw' biker three-part back-patch 'colours' (Shearman, Wear & Brewer 2005: 10, 48).

4. Interestingly, some outlaw biker's appear to have identified more with Lee Marvin's character, 'Chino,' than they did with the Brando 'Johnny' character (Harris 1985: 21). For those with a taste for movie trivia, Veno (2003) and others claim that 'The Beatles' took their name from Marvin's character Chino's 'motorcycle gang,' the 'Beetles.' *The Wild One* was banned in Britain until 1968, and in New Zealand until 1977 (Veno 2003: 30). (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0047677/trivia>, and Yska 1993:114).
5. Examples of these biker 'B' movies (and by no means exhaustive) are *The Wild One* (1953), *Motorcycle Gang* (1957), *Motor Psycho* (1965), *Wild Angels* (1966), *Devils Angels* (1967), *Hells Angels on Wheels* (1967), *Born Losers* (1967), *Glory Stompers*, (1967), *She-Devils on Wheels* (1968), *Hell's Belles* (1968), *The HellCats* (1968), *Angels From Hell* (1968), *Run, Angel, Run* (1969), *Naked Angels* (1969), *Wild Wheels* (1969), *Hell's Angels '69* (1969), *Satan's Sadists* (1969), *Cycle Savages* (1970), *Rebel Rousers* (1970), *Hell's Bloody Devils* (1970), *The Losers* (1970), *Angels Die Hard* (1970), *Angels Unchained* (1970), *Black Angels* (1970), *The Hard Ride* (1971), *Bury me an Angel* (1971), *Chrome and Hot Leather* (1971), *Angels: Hard as they Come* (1971), *Angels' Wild Women* (1972), *The Dirt Gang* (1972), *The Loners* (1972), and *Road of Death* (1974). The Californian *Hell's Angels* were less than impressed by the besmirching of their name, and subsequently reached an out-of-court settlement with producer-director Roger Corman over the use of their name and imagery in *The Wild Angels*, which subsequently resulted in their collaboration on *Hells Angels on Wheels* (1967), and *Hell's Angels 69*, amongst others. The titles of many of these early biker movies clearly indicate the influence that stories in the mass media about the alleged exploits of the Californian *Hell's Angels* had on popular culture at that time.
6. These include *Two Wheels on Two Reels* (2000), *High on the Hogs: A Film Filmography* (2003), *The Big Book of Biker Flicks* (2005), *Biker: Truth and Myth: How the Original Cowboy of the Road Became the Easy Raider of the Silver Screen* (2005), and *Bad Mags: The Flip Side of Popular Culture As Seen Through Magazines and Tabloids* (2005).
7. Other examples of 'outlaw' biker books published or republished in the late 60s/early 70s by *New English Library*, are Hugh Barron's *Bonnie*, Peter Cave's (1971) *Chopper*, (1972) *Mama*, *Rogue Angels*, etcetera, Thomas K. Fitzpatrick's *The Blood Circus*, Mick Norman's *Angels on my Mind*, *Angels from Hell*, etcetera, Thom Ryder's *Avenging Angel* etcetera, and Alex Stuart's *The Outlaws*, *The Devils Rider*, etcetera.
8. An example is a biker-orientated book that I have retained from my youth. The book is a novel, *Gently Go Man* [1961] (1963), written by the English crime writer, Alan Hunter. This was an earlier effort from Hunter's 'George Gently' series of 46 books that span the period 1955 – 1998. Hunter was obviously inspired in writing this particular book by popular culture (possibly the film, *The Wild One*, which was banned in the UK at that time). The cover records the title and subtitle (followed by an endorsement of the book by an unspecified *Sunday Telegraph* reviewer) - '*Gently Go Man: Wild ones ... but one was the wildest – and Gently has to find him.*' 'You'll make with this book like crazy.' *Sunday Telegraph*. The central 'outlaw character, 'Deeming' is perhaps best described as a cross between a 'beatnik' and a 'rocker,' a cool, cunning individual from "the

big smoke,” who is a hugely influential figure to the impressionable regional youth he is now associating with. ‘Deeming’ has a powerful motorcycle that he rides with reckless abandon. But it is obvious that it will all end in tears at bedtime, as this deviant biker is also trafficking in the dreaded ‘beat’ substance, Marijuana (“reefers”). Whilst the main character is Superintendent Gently, a very sympathetic, older police detective character, the standout character for me was the doomed biker, ‘Deeming.’ ‘Deeming’ ultimately took his own life by deliberately riding his motorcycle at high speed into a huge tree at the bottom of a long straight, rather than surrender to the inevitable lengthy jail term he was facing. This book was a superior novel to many other ‘biker’ books of the day, and was primarily a crime novel, but it was the biker anti-hero who really captured my imagination (which is probably the reason why I chose to retain it for so many years, when so many others fell by the wayside)

9. This book has become highly collectable internationally, and original copies now sell for the equivalent of NZ\$300 - \$500 when they come on the second-hand book market.
10. Saxton went on to become a rather notorious figure in ‘underground’ publishing, writing a number of dubious ‘underground’ survivalist type books, many of them published by *Paladin Press* throughout the 80s and 90s, including Saxton’s notorious (1986) *Poor Man’s James Bond* (1986).

#### **Chapter Four: *Hell’s Angels*, Outlaws, and the ‘Outlaw’ Motorcycle Pages 50 – 80 incl.**

1. Thompson came to *Rolling Stone* from *Scanlan’s Monthly* at the end of 1970, and remained *Rolling Stone*’s National Affairs Editor until he parted company with them in 1982. He was a regular contributor throughout that period, and is considered to have been hugely influential in the journalistic direction the magazine took throughout the 1970s. Thompson subsequently went to achieve cult status as a major influential figure in the documenting of popular culture, but it was arguably this break-through first (published) book that provided the impetus to elevate him to this status level. *Hell’s Angels: A Strange and terrible Saga*, set the benchmark for investigative journalists and lay cultural ethnographers, which is evidenced by the fact that the book has constantly remained in print to this day. It was celebrated in December 1999 by a special hard-covered *Modern Library* edition, with an introduction by no less than the influential American academic and writer, Douglas Brinkley. His style of ‘Gonzo’ journalism was to be much imitated by other investigative journalists of the day, particular by his shameless imitator, P. J. O’Rourke. Arguably, it was Hunter Thompson’s later association with the American popular culture magazine, *Rolling Stone* (November 1967 -) that was the catalyst for his ultimate cult status as one of the most important chroniclers of American popular culture, from the 1970s, until his death (by suicide) in February 2005.
2. Barger remains arguably the most recognisable outlaw biker in the world. He is the machine has ensured that the Angel’s death’s head insignia has become an internationally recognise ‘brand,’ through the aggressive application of international copyright laws. Today Barger’s image is instantly recognised on the highly professional *Hell’s Angels M.C.* websites, and his likeness is recorded on *Hell’s Angels* supporter T-Shirts. Sonny is simply marketed as ‘Sonny Barger – An American Legend.’

3. This incident is so enshrined in popular culture that the actual song *The Rolling Stones* were playing at the time of the stabbing is often still debated by those interested in the history of popular culture – a senseless murder has become rock trivia, as though the Stones' choice of song had some bearing on what actually happened that day (Biskind, 1998: 197 – 198). For the record, the Stones were not playing 'Sympathy for the Devil' when Hunter was stabbed – they were into the first verse of 'Under my thumb,' although the version of 'Under My Thumb' that actually appears in the film was actually played after the killing, with the stabbing footage moved to the end of the second version of the song.  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0065780/trivia>
4. Some argue that it was this event that is commemorated in Don McLean's *American Pie* with the line "*The day the music died*", and not the death of Buddy Holly, as is generally accepted.
5. Harris' book was published by *Faber & Faber* at the insistence of *The Who* guitarist and philanthropist, Pete Townsend, who allegedly pressured *Faber & Faber* to publish original works that were often not picked up by other publishers (Harris 1985: 6).
6. An example is Crime Correspondent Tony Thompson's headline in the *Observer-Guardian*'s headline of Sunday 15 October 2000: 'Was Noye case witness killed by Hell's Angels?' The subsequent article in fact contains no solid information to suggest that the Hell's Angels, or any other motorcycle gang for that matter, were in fact involved in the murder of the witness Decabral (sic), other than the claim that he was a member of an unidentified motorcycle gang), and that, 'The Canadian Hell's Angels have been linked to a string of murders and police are investigating a theory that Decabral, a member of a British biker gangs, may have crossed them over a drugs deal – and paid the price.' Like most articles of this type, it does not record if these comments, by implication attributed to the police, were actually made in response to the reporter's own question. As Stern and Stern (1992: 210) argue, "... At various times in Hell's Angels history, they have been held forth as ready symbols of freedom, rebellion, machismo, cowardice, hipness, innocence, depravity, honesty, sex, homosexuality, heterosexuality, brotherhood, hate (Stern and Stern 1990: 210).
7. A classic example is the Australian iconic outlaw, Ned Kelly, who is still seen by many Australians as the archetypal 'little Aussie battler.' The Kelly legend is now so distorted by time that few remember that he and his gang also murdered an associate who they suspected was a police informant, and recklessly held a large number of innocent hostages in a hotel building for a lengthy period, before their ill conceived, fateful shoot out with Police at Glenrowan. The Australian painter Sidney Nolan's famous Ned Kelly series painted in 1946 – 47 are amongst some of the most recognisable of Australian cultural images. In fact, Nolan's most famous painting from this series, Ned Kelly riding into a landscape with the slit of the outlaw's helmet revealing clouds behind, was used as the first big screen image at the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony in 2000.
8. A recent example of the rewriting of history was Mel Gibson's portrayal of one of Scotland's greatest national heroes, the Scottish 'commoner' revolutionary, Sir William Wallace, in his major (1995) movie, *Braveheart*. One of the standout scenes in *Braveheart* is Gibson's pre-battle rallying speech to the assembled rag-tag Scottish rebels: 'Aye, fight and you may die, run, and you'll live ... at least a while. And dying in your beds, many years from now, would you be willin' to trade ALL the days, from this day to that, for one chance, to come back here, and tell your enemies that they may take our lives, but they'll never take ... OUR

FREEDOM!’ [Crowd cheers wildly]. A very heady, oft repeated, hugely inspiring ‘resistance’ speech. The question that needs to be asked however, is did William Wallace really make that magnificent, impromptu, rallying speech, or was it Mel Gibson? This movie had glaring historical inaccuracies, distortions that in no way impacted upon its international popularity. *Braveheart* was shamelessly used by the Scottish Tourist Board to boost international tourism, and certainly had a considerable impact upon Scottish pride and the cause of Scottish nationalism. Some may view such figures as dangerous criminals, rebels, murderers, who usually died violent deaths before their time. The term ‘outlaw’ therefore does not necessarily have a particularly negative connotation, when used as a metaphor for resistance, independence and personal freedom. It is very similar to the rather spurious argument that ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.’ Perhaps this phenomenon is best argued as being defined by perspective.

9. See Ridley Scott’s (2000) film, *Gladiator*.
10. This film clearly establishes the archetypal ‘outlaw,’ William Munny, a retired gunfighter with a murderous past, as an anti-hero. The plot construction requires Munny to ultimately perform a cathartic act of justifiable retribution by murdering the vicious and corrupt control-freak sheriff, ‘Little Bill’ Daggett (Gene Hackman), and his henchmen. My participants saw this film as a continuation of the type of movies that they watched for enjoyment in the 60s and 70s.
11. The four Harley-Davidson motorcycles built for *Easy Rider* started out their lives as police motorcycles! Stretched-fork choppers like the *Captain America* example are totally impractical for anything other than touring – they corner badly, and have a hard-tail (a lack of adequate rear suspension), which makes for a very uncomfortable ride over any distance. But they look cool, and demonstrate that a suitably skilled (and well-funded) owner can transform his conventional Harley-Davidson motorcycle into a ‘outlaw’ ‘chopped’ version that will ultimately become an extension of his individual ‘outlaw’ biker identity (and make him instantly recognisable amongst other ‘outlaw’ bikers).
12. The chopper has arguably become a transformative motor vehicle as the result of the iconic *Captain America* chopper in *Easy Rider*. Film buffs will recall Bruce Willis’s character Butch, from Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction* (1994) arriving back after his close encounter with the rapist Zed, casually riding Zed’ chopper motorcycle. Fabienne: ‘Whose motorcycle is this?’ Butch: ‘It’s a chopper. Baby.’ Fabienne: ‘Whose chopper is this?’ Butch: ‘It’s Zed’s.’ Fabienne: ‘Whose Zed?’ Butch: ‘Zed’s dead, baby, Zed’s dead.’ In popular culture, a chopper motorcycle is deemed to be a suitably transformative machine to successfully transport the hapless Butch and dim-witted Fabienne to a new life out of LA.
13. Hunter Thompson reportedly observed, ‘the edge ... there is no honest way to explain it because the only people who really know where it is are the ones who have gone over (attrib).
14. Hunter Thompson’s talks about an over zealous ‘wannabe’ Hell’s Angel, a Chinese-American named Ping-Pong, who was desperately trying to show ‘class’ - ‘...When I got there he (sic) was playing pool with Okie Ray, Crazy Rock and a young Chinaman called Ping-Pong ... Ping-Pong was doing most of the talking and I wasn’t sure what to make of him. He wasn’t wearing any colours and I’d never heard of a Chinese Hell’s Angel, but he talked like a veteran. (Later I was told that Ping-Pong had an obsession about getting into the club and spent most of

his time hanging around the Box Shop and the DePau (sic). He had no bike, but tried to compensate by carrying a snub-nosed .357 Magnum revolver in his hip pocket. The Angels were not impressed. They already had one Chinese member, a mechanic at the local Harley-Davidson shop, but he was a quiet, dependable type and nothing like Ping-Pong, who made the outlaws nervous. They knew he was determined to impress them and they feared his inordinate zeal. He was so anxious to show class, they said, that he was likely to get them all busted' 1966: 53).

15. This is evidenced by the regular, highly publicised soft-toy runs by bikers before Christmas, and other often somewhat incongruous public gestures such as the regular 'poker runs' that a number of clubs take part in (Veno 2003: 122). 'Outlaw' clubs are just as adept at using the media as others are!
16. Rampant cocaine use was catalyst for the massacre of the leadership of the doomed Hell's Angel's North or 'Laval' chapter in Quebec, Canada in 1985, where the bulk of the core patched members were murdered and dumped in the St Lawrence River, and the chapter closed down for a period (Lavigne 1987: 246 - 277).

#### **Chapter Five: The Mass Media and the Symbolic Construction of a Generic South Island (New Zealand) 'Outlaw' Biker Community**

##### **Pages 81 – 121 incl.**

1. Parker and Hulme, aged 16 and 15 years respectively, had killed Parker's mother with a brick in a bizarre and ill-conceived plot to free themselves from the mother's influences. The resulting trial scandalised the New Zealand public which heard evidence of a illicit lesbian relationship between the two girls, of Parker's sexual liaison with a male boarder, and explicit (for the day) details of the weird fantasy life that the girls had woven around their mundane, and outwardly conservative lives (Yska, R. 1993: 60 – 63). The 'Parker-Hulme' murder was the subject of Peter Jackson's (1994) break-through movie, *Heavenly Creatures*.
2. In 1917, New Zealand introduced licensing laws that stipulated six o'clock closing, a law that was widely flouted (Butterworth 2005: 18). In 1967 there was a dramatic modernisation of licensing that saw the extension of drinking hours to 10 pm, following a referendum (Butterworth 2005: 94).
3. The proprietors of the various Christchurch Book exchanges that stocked this type of literature told me that there is still a ready market for these somewhat dated novels, which quickly disappear from their shelves whenever they do become available for recirculation.
4. Thompson 1966) certainly informed budding 'outlaw bikers' how the Californian *Hell's Angels* initiated their 'patched' members (Thompson 1966: 54-5). Other examples include descriptions of initiations contained in Reynolds (1967), and the later Wethern and Colnett (1978).
5. This participant recalls that it featured, 'a great 66' or thereabouts flat-tank Norton (motorcycle), as far as I can remember' (it was in fact a 750cc Norton Atlas) - 'a gorgeous bike,' that was ridden by Alan Delon's character, Daniel, whilst Faithfull's character Rebecca rode a *Harley-Davidson 900 Sportster*, given to her by her lover Daniel, 'who sees it as a symbol of their shared passion' (Wooley and



Price, 2005: 50). Which was an interesting recollection, as all that I remember about the movie was the young, devastatingly beautiful, Bardotish Marianne Faithfull! This participant did not see *Easyrider* until some years after it was released, and said that his primary interest in the film was the two 'outlaw' motorcycles that Fonda and Hopper rode.

6. 'Cuzzy Bro' is an inoffensive contemporary generic term that is generally used to reference someone of Maori heritage, used by both Maori and Pakeha. I am Pakeha, but one of my Maori cousins routinely references me to others as his 'cuzzy bro.'
7. This has obviously changed today, with the advent of the globalised multi-media industry that now carries digital images to the four corners of the earth via television, the internet, and even cellular telephones, in relatively real time, as we saw with the images that came out of Abu Ghraib, via the US television news-magazine programme *60 Minutes* in April 2004. A good example of the power of this developing electronic media to prompt a timely response is Bob Geldof's immediate reaction to a television documentary about the Ethiopian famine, which led to the hugely successful 'Band Aid' and the subsequent 'Live Aid' international fundraising efforts.
8. This observation is reinforced by comments made in the Glebe (New South Wales, Australia) Coroners Court by the father of a murdered woman, which was subsequently reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper. The father was comparing the off-hand response that he had experienced from his daughter's employer following the woman's disappearance to a starkly different response from the "leader of the local chapter of the Rebels motorcycle club" who vaguely "knew Ms Childs through a second-hand car yard he ran at Bargo." The father told the court that the biker had immediately offered his help and support (Cooke 2006).

## Chapter Six: Media, Police and Moral Panic

### Pages 122 – 146 incl.

1. The 23 April 1979 edition of the *New Zealand Herald* carried an article that said, "... A couple of North Shore policemen let a carload of Black Power members know precisely where they stood last week. The officers introduced themselves as members of the exclusive Blue Power group, the biggest gang in the country with more than 4000 members". Source – Jarrod Gilbert, *University of Canterbury*.
2. From my person knowledge, and from discussions with current and former police gang liaison officers, Police gang liaison officers are today more willing to openly intervene in a timely fashion to address bad practice, or grievances arising from police operations. On occasions they will act as mediator and negotiate the return of property, etcetera. This is important for Police – club relations, as club members have no faith whatsoever in the ability (or will) of the *Police Complaints Authority* (now the '*Independent*' *Police Complainants Authority*) to deal with their complaints.
3. This was reflected in a scathing 110-page judgement delivered by Alberta Provincial Court Judge A. A. Fradsham in 2002 that dealt with the 1997 Police road stops of *Hell's Angels* at Red Deer, Alberta, and with the reliability of subsequent evidence presented to the court. Judge Fradsham roundly criticised Police for a long standing practice where so called police 'experts' at times

perpetuate unsubstantiated and spurious urban myths that subsequently become police 'legend.' These unsubstantiated stories and outright urban myths may subsequently be presented to the courts by other police officers in the form of expert evidence, or in affidavits in support of police applications for search and interception warrants, etcetera (Lavigne 2004: viii).

4. The same sort of sweeping generalisations were made during the recent 'Gang Patch ban' debate at Wanganui (Laws 2006).
5. When Muldoon died in August 1992, one hundred *Black Power* gang members delivered a powerful haka of respect as Muldoon's hearse left his funeral service at the Auckland Town Hall.

### **Glossary:**

'1%er'	A member of an 'outlaw' motorcycle club. The term is derived from an alleged comment by the <i>American Motorcycle Association</i> that 99% of motorcyclists are law abiding.
'81s'	An 'insider' term for <i>Hell's Angels M.C.</i> (H = the 8 <sup>th</sup> letter in alphabet, etc)
'Acid'	Lysergide Acid or L.S.D.
'Apehangers'	Extreme (high) motorcycle handlebars, commonly fitted to chopper and 'old style' custom motorcycles.
Associate:	A friend of the club who may ultimately graduate to being a Prospect.
Bobber:	A 'Bobber' is a stripped down motorcycle that has a relatively stock front end (as opposed to the extended front forks that can be seen on the 'Captain America' chopper in <i>Easy Rider</i> ).
Bottom rocker:	See 'Gang patch,'
Chopper:	A 'chopper' is a stripped down motorcycle that is often fitted with extended front forks, similar to the 'Captain America' motorcycle in <i>Easy Rider</i> . Choppers are also generally fitted with high 'Apehanger' handlebars.
Custom bike:	A custom bike may have some of the features of the chopper and the bobber, but essentially it is a motorcycle that the owner/fabricator has customised to make the motorcycle uniquely his.
Cuzzy bro'	A New Zealand slang term for Maori, but sometimes it is also used by New Zealand Europeans or "Pakehas" to refer to Maori friends, or to biological cousins, whether Maori or Pakeha.
'Dak'	New Zealand street term of cannabis. Also known as weed, smoke, along with many other colloquialisms.
'Gang' Patch:	Traditionally, a three-piece back-patch worn on a sleeveless over jacket. Consists of top 'rocker' which records the 'gang' or 'club' name, a centrepiece, which bears the 'gang' or 'club' logo, and the bottom rocker that will either record the geographic location or the country.
'Hog'	A <i>Harley-Davidson motorcycle</i> . A customised Harley is often referred to as a 'chopped Hog.'
'Nark'	Informant or 'rat.' Police tend refer to an informant as a 'fizz.'

'Out in bad standing'	A club member rejected by his club, usually because he has breached club rules. Other members are not allowed to associate with an ex member who has been ejected from the club 'in bad standing.' Members ejected in bad standing are invariably required to block out club tattoos, and most tend to relocate, or at least studiously avoid places where they could encounter their former club mates.
'P' (or 'Pure')	Highly addictive form of Methamphetamine that is smoked or "burned."
'Patched':	A full member of the club.
'Prospect':	A member 'officially' prospecting for an unspecified period to see if he has the mettle to become a patched member of the club.
'Rat'	One of many names given to informants.
'Ratted out'	Given up by an informant (generally in reference to the police).
'Run'	Generally a planned motorcycle road trip with others
'Side patch':	Generally worn on shoulders, and indicates membership of organization.
'Top rocker':	See 'Gang patch.'
'Trips'	Tabs of "Acid.'
'Tripping'	Under the influence of an hallucinogenic drug, particularly L.S.D

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